

DARING DEEDS OF MERCHANT SEAMEN

■ IN THE GREAT WAR ■





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IN THE GREAT WAR**

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“Stand and Deliver!”
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DARING DEEDS OF MERCHANT SEAMEN IN THE GREAT WAR

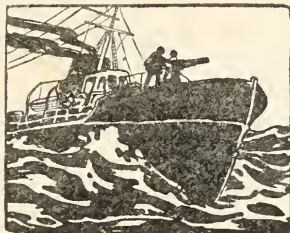
BY

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AUTHOR OF

'STIRRING DEEDS OF BRITAIN'S SEA-DOGS' ETC.



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DEDICATED
TO
DAVID FIELD AND PETER
BEATTY

*To be master of the sea is an
abridgment of a monarchy.*

FRANCIS BACON

MERCHANTMEN

*All honour be to merchantmen,
And ships of all degree,
In warlike dangers manifold,
Who sail and keep the sea,
In peril of unlitten coast
And death-besprinkled foam,
Who daily dare a hundred deaths
To bring their cargoes home.*

*A liner out of Liverpool—a tanker from
the Clyde—
A hard-run tramp from anywhere—a tug
from Merseyside—
A cattle-boat from Birkenhead—a coaler
from the Tyne—
All honour be to merchantmen while any
star shall shine !*

*All honour be to merchantmen,
And ships both great and small :
The swift and strong to run their race
And smite their foes withal ;
The little ships that sink or swim,
And pay the pirates' toll,
Unarmoured save by valiant hearts,
And strong in nought but soul.*

*All honour be to merchantmen,
As long as tides shall run,
Who gave the seas their glorious dead
From rise to set of sun ;
All honour be to merchantmen
While England's name shall stand,
Who sailed and fought, and dared and
died,
And served and saved their land.*

*A sailing ship from Liverpool—a tanker
from the Clyde—
A schooner from the West Countrie—a
tug from Merseyside—
A fishing-smack from Grimsby town—a
coaler from the Tyne—
All honour be to merchantmen while sun
and moon shall shine !*

C. FOX SMITH

Foreword

UNTIL the coming of the latter-day pirates there was a freemasonry of the sea that seemed destined to endure for all time. Fights there might be, but clean and straightforward, and true to the accredited rules of naval warfare. Belligerents would 'play the game' on the sea whatever might happen elsewhere.

When the Central Powers severed this bond of brotherhood by culpable ruthlessness and foul murder, the alienation of German sailors merely served to consolidate the remainder. Far from 'putting the wind up' their former fellow voyagers, the frightfulness of the Huns drew them nearer together. Enemy brutality on the high seas had more to do with the entry of Uncle Sam into the conflict than any other factor.

No record of the deeds of valour performed by officers and men of the British Mercantile Marine can be other than incomplete. Were this volume thrice as bulky, and set in the

Daring Deeds

smallest of small type, it would not suffice to relate a tithe of the examples of pluck and endurance shown on the Seven Seas since the tremulous days of August 1914. Unfortunately many noble acts of stoical courage and cool daring must remain unrevealed and unsung. Some of those most intimately concerned in the making of them have joined the vast Fellowship of the Deep, of which Drake, Grenville, Cradock, and Hood are members. They are the courtiers of Neptune's grim kingdom of the underseas, and "dead men tell no tales."

Incidentally it may be mentioned that living heroes are almost as reticent. Wild horses, either terrestrial or maritime, will scarcely suffice to drag their stories of daring from them. Your average sailor is not good at spinning a yarn where his own exploits are concerned. It has been both my privilege and pleasure to spend many an hour in the bowels of a steamer while the inevitable Scottish engineer endeavoured to make my blood run cold in a temperature exceeding that of the tropics, but personal bravery is

Foreword

always discounted, except in others. The captain on the fore bridge, whether he be born north or south of the Tweed, invariably displays the same annoying characteristic. 'Old Bill' or 'Young Jack' are metaphorically held up for admiration, themselves never. Salt water makes philosophers of men, and philosophers are not apt to swagger. Like Gyles of the *Broke*, they say, "I only did my duty."

At the best of times the sea is not quite so stable a friend as the land. Add to the inevitable dangers of the deep peril by mine, submarine, aircraft, raiders, and the enemy's navy proper, and "a life on the ocean wave" must be conceded to be the least enviable of occupations. For a decade previous to 1914 many prominent thinkers held that certain social tendencies seemed to prove that some of the fundamental qualities of our island race were rapidly declining. In cities and towns more especially, endurance was said to be giving place to lethargy, honest toil to love of ease, refinement to coarseness, and the issue between Capital and Labour

Daring Deeds

to something approaching a bitter internecine war. Whatever truth there may have been in these notions, the testing time of 1914 and onward proved beyond the shadow of doubt that the British had not lost their recuperative powers. A great Citizen Army held the highly organized professional military arm of Germany at bay; men and women in machine shop and munition factory showed that the workers had not surrendered to ignoble ideals; the nation whose very basis was freedom supported the heavy yoke of discipline without protest, and Capital and Labour slowly began to appreciate the obvious and therefore unrecognized fact that the one cannot exist without the other.

Concerning the seafarer the slightest suspicion of degeneracy was never entertained. He toiled on in fair weather and foul, in every clime, in every season, all day and every day. He had neither opportunity nor desire to follow the path of the land-lubber. Atlas-like, he supported Britain on his broad shoulders despite increasing hazards. The might of the Navy is due to a very appreci-

Foreword

able extent to the might of the Merchant Service, and it is the latter which is the real binding link of the Empire. Never before in our history have we so much appreciated the men who "go down to the sea in ships and occupy their business in great waters." The present conflict has accentuated our irredeemable debt of gratitude to them.

In a companion volume¹ I have already cited examples of stirring deeds that have added to the glory of those whose habitat is our super-Dreadnoughts, battle-cruisers, destroyers, and such-like. The following pages deal with the crews of more humble craft. It is no disparagement to Jack Tar to say that his brethren in a less imposing sphere of action are his equals in daring. Indeed, he is the first to admit it. All British sea-dogs are of the same breed, though they do not all live in the same kind of kennel, and some are not quite so well groomed as others. Previous to the outbreak of hostilities there was, of course, a marked distinction

¹ *Stirring Deeds of Britain's Sea-dogs in the Great War* (London, Harrap, 1916).

Daring Deeds

between His Majesty's Navy and the Mercantile Marine ; to-day the difference is one of degree only. They give mutual support, they are active co-operators in a common cause, and the defeat of one would negative the victory of the other. Quite apart from what may be termed the general war service of the Mercantile Marine—which includes the bringing of food and raw material to the Motherland, and the carrying of coal and other supplies to our Allies—there is the special service of transporting men and munitions to every scene of conflict. She is the warm, rich blood, as the Navy is the spinal cord, of the body politic.

A large number of ships which formerly pursued the peaceful paths of commerce, of pleasure, and of travel have been converted into armed auxiliaries. For a time the Red Ensign has given place to the White Ensign, goods to guns, and state cabins to hammocks. These vessels are the Special Constables of the sea. They patrol our coasts and elsewhere with unceasing vigilance, and although they have not a ha'p'orth of protecting armour,

Foreword

they have acquitted themselves with distinction. Reflect for a moment on the gallant fight put up by the *Carmania*, and your whole being will glow with pride. When the full story of their excellent work comes to be told, it will be found that these patrols have exacted a heavy toll of sea pests and taken a goodly number of prizes.

Then there are the transports, which bring their khaki-clad passengers from the uttermost parts of the earth and dump them where they are most needed. While these vessels are less likely to meet with mishap because they are not usually left to fend for themselves, the fact that some of them have been torpedoed is sufficient to prove that they are not immune from the wiles of a subtle enemy.

What of the smaller fry—the drifters and trawlers which have played their part, and a very important part, in sweeping for canned death in the shape of mines? Beatty's band of brothers would never "barge about the North Sea," to use the Admiral's expressive term, without their aid. You will find many references in the following pages to the

Daring Deeds

erstwhile fishers who play hide-and-seek with eternity in these floating representatives of impudence.

This little volume makes no claim to original research, but I have been able to obtain certain information from persons who have the best right to speak, namely, those who have played a part in several of the events described. In response to my appeal for help they have been willing to practise the old proverb that "The exception proves the rule." I can only thank them, and hope that their inspiring stories as they now appear in print for the first time have not been altogether spoiled in the telling.

Sir David Beatty has been kind enough to send a personal message to the readers of this book. Here it is: "*The British Empire has every reason to be proud of the Mercantile Marine, and to appreciate the gallantry and devotion displayed by officers and men on so many occasions during the past three years.*"

HAROLD F. B. WHEELER

NORTHWOOD, MIDDLESEX

Contents

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE <i>CARMANIA</i> 'S DUEL	19
II. THE RAIDER AND THE 6-PDR. . . .	30
III. CRIME ON THE HIGH SEAS	42
IV. "STOP, OR I FIRE!"	57
V. THROUGH UNCHARTED WATERS	66
VI. FISHING FOR CANNED DEATH	78
VII. "LIKE ENGLISH GENTLEMEN"	97
VIII. HIDE-AND-SEEK WITH SUBMARINES	109
IX. SEA ROVERS AND PRISON SHIPS	125
X. PERILS OF THE PATROL	151
XI. AUXILIARY CRUISERS AT WORK	168
XII. IN THE SEA OF DEAD MEN'S BONES	183
XIII. THE MAILED FIST AT SEA	194
XIV. THE GENTLE ART OF SUBMARINE-CHASING	218
XV. THE CROWNING INFAMY	244
XVI. WIZARDS OF THE WIRELESS	273
XVII. DRIFTERS IN ACTION	291
XVIII. AN AFFAIR OF CONVOYS	309

Illustrations

	PAGE
"STAND AND DELIVER!" <i>G. H. Davis</i>	<i>Frontispiece</i>
THE SINKING OF THE S.S. <i>FALABA</i> . <i>Cecil King</i> .	60
THE <i>ANGLO-CALIFORNIAN</i> ACTION AGAINST A SUB- MARINE. <i>Chas. Pears</i>	114
GERMAN SAILING-SHIP USED AS A RAIDER. <i>Chas.</i> <i>Pears</i>	162
THE DUEL BETWEEN THE <i>ALCANTARA</i> AND THE <i>GREIF</i> . <i>Chas. Pears</i>	176
TORPEDOED WITHOUT WARNING. <i>Chas. Pears</i> .	204
MEN OF THE <i>DIOMED</i> CLINGING TO UPTURNED BOATS. <i>F. Matania</i>	214
PROVING A U-BOAT'S END. <i>Chas. Pears</i> . .	238
THE SINKING OF THE HOSPITAL SHIP <i>ANGLIA</i> . <i>W. H. Koek-koek</i>	270

CHAPTER I

The "Carmania's" Duel

"Make no mistake about it, but for the Navy and the Merchant Service you could have no British Empire such as it exists to-day."—SIR EDWARD CARSON.

THE *Carmania* was ploughing the waters of an unfamiliar sea. Further, the great liner was not quite herself. She had taken on new dignity and responsibility. With these things had come an alteration in appearance that accentuated, rather than detracted from, the beauty of her lines.

The ship of peace had turned man-of-war. The erstwhile Cunarder, which formerly plied the North Atlantic highway between Liverpool and New York with almost the regularity that one expects in a well-managed railway service, was now a member of His Majesty's Navy—an auxiliary liner, to be exact. She had left her home port on the 15th August, 1914, thereby giving cause for consternation

Daring Deeds

to a number of Americans who had every reason to believe that she would transport them across the Herring Pond. The 'other circumstances' so familiar to readers of shipping announcements had intervened. Would-be passengers discovered that the *Carmania* had been commandeered by the British Government.

The primary duty of an auxiliary cruiser is to protect trade routes. At the moment H.M.S. *Carmania* was off the east coast of South America, running at sixteen knots without over-exertion, the sea calm, the sun bright, the wind a moderate breeze from the north-east. A 'fine-weather-for-a-sail' day. She had been a month out, and some of the sailors were beginning to think that war was not nearly so terrible as it had been made out to be, when something happened to alter their views.

Many of the men were sitting down to dinner. Without any preliminary warning, the pleasurable symphony of knives and forks was rudely interrupted by a signal which sent every man Jack of them to his allotted

The “Carmania’s” Duel

station. ‘Action’ had been sounded many times before on the way down south *via* Bermuda and Trinidad when a vessel had appeared on the skyline. It might mean much, little, or nothing at all; coming at such a time it was certainly inconvenient.

Those on deck saw a cluster of three or four ships, which was somewhat unusual, and perhaps rather more than a trifle suspicious. The glasses revealed them as colliers and a liner. Some eye-witnesses say there were two colliers, others three. The matter is unimportant, for they played no part in the sequel so far as the *Carmania* was concerned. The colour of the funnels of the liner made them appear as though they belonged to a unit of the Union-Castle fleet, but in war things are not taken for granted, as in peace they are not always what they seem.

The mystery ships were neither to port nor starboard, but straight ahead. No sooner did they find that their doings were under observation than they separated. Each made off in a different direction, which was quite the wisest thing to do in the circumstances.

Daring Deeds

It also proved beyond possibility of doubt that they had no right to be there. To admit that your enemy has even the right to exist is tantamount to failure. In war the Seven Seas are British. That has been the point of view of the English sailor for generations, and long may it remain so.

At first it appeared as though the liner were endeavouring to run away. The *Carmania* followed in her wake at full speed, 'hell for leather' as a sailor characterized it. This manœuvre was evidently carried out to give the small fry a chance to escape, for suddenly she turned broadside on to her pursuer and waited.

When the *Carmania* was about three and a half miles off, Captain Noel Grant, R.N., politely fired a shot across the stranger's bows. This time-honoured method of asking the other fellow his business is usually wonderfully effective. It was so in this case. The challenge was immediately accepted. Up went the Kaiser's colours at the masthead. Almost simultaneously there was a flash from the liner's starboard after-gun, and a shell

The "Carmania's" Duel

whistled over the British auxiliary. The duellists had crossed swords.

All the port guns of the *Carmania* were brought to bear on the now-admitted enemy. She proved to be the armed merchant ship *Cap Trafalgar*, owned by the Hamburg-South American Company, and to all intents and purposes a new vessel. She had a tonnage of 18,710, a speed of eighteen knots, and mounted eight 4-in. guns and pom-poms. The *Carmania* was a slightly larger vessel of about the same speed, her gross tonnage being 19,524. It is not permissible to give particulars of her armament, but it may be mentioned that a ship which is intended primarily for the Merchant Service cannot be fitted with guns of large calibre, while extensive structural alterations would have to be made before an appreciable number of small guns could be mounted. As subsequent events proved, it was the quality of the firing rather than the quantity of shells hurled that won the day. In stating this we are also paying a tribute to skilful seamanship, without which accurate shooting is impossible.

Daring Deeds

During the course of the action the *Carmania* fired over 400 rounds, and the gunners were instructed to aim at the water-line of their opponent. At first the commander of the *Cap Trafalgar* evidently sought to overwhelm his enemy by rapidity of fire, directed, judging by results, at the sides and superstructure of the *Carmania*. With great skill the captain of the British cruiser kept his ship bow or stern on, which meant that a relatively small target was presented to the enemy. In the preliminary stages of the fight, so great was the intensity of the German fire that for every shot that left the *Carmania's* guns four or five came from the enemy. "Then," writes an officer, "the firing from both ships became fast and furious."

In less than half an hour it was beyond doubt that the German auxiliary was getting the worst of the duel, though she showed not the slightest inclination to surrender. Two direct hits had played havoc with her deck steam-pipes, and a fire that had started forward was obviously getting beyond control. The glow grew fiercer and brighter with the

The "Carmania's" Duel

passing of the minutes. As though in retaliation, a well-placed shell went through the cabins beneath the bridge of the *Carmania*. It failed to explode, but the same dread peril now threatened the British ship. Although prompt measures were taken to cope with the flames, these were unsuccessful, and it became necessary to abandon the fore bridge. Had the fire main been working there would probably have been comparatively little difficulty in quelling the outbreak, but it had been shot through. Telegraphs and steering-gear were completely wrecked, and the chart-house and other quarters reduced to charred wood. The ship was now conned from the lower steering position.

As the end of the duel approached, the guns of the *Cap Trafalgar* spoke less frequently, and she became enveloped in a pall of smoke. She was still under way, with an ugly list to starboard which gradually became more and more noticeable. An effort to make a 'dash for it' completely failed; in her weak and crippled condition she made more water than speed.

Daring Deeds

The firing from the *Carmania* also died down as the enemy's heel increased. The latter was now at the mercy of the hated British. Yet the German ensign still floated defiantly in the breeze. Three rounds were fired into her to remind her of the fact. Then she gradually toppled over. One gun remained in action almost until the last, though there was not the remotest chance of the shells falling anywhere near the victor.

As the funnels of the *Cap Trafalgar* reached the water there was an explosion, after which her bows were no longer visible. A second burst heralded the end. With a grave dignity the representative of His Imperial Majesty's Navy turned her keel to the sky, assumed an almost perpendicular position, then disappeared in a gigantic whirlpool. The *Cap Trafalgar* had been 'game' to the last. Her colours, still flying, went with her into the deeps.

When an opportunity came to take stock of the *Carmania's* hurts it was found that she had suffered over 300 wounds from some

The "Carmania's" Duel

eighty hits received during her gallant fight, which lasted an hour and forty minutes.

There was not the slightest chance to lend a helping hand to the survivors of the *Cap Trafalgar*. Just previous to her sinking five boatloads of men were seen to leave the doomed cruiser and be picked up by one of the colliers. Even had time been available, Captain Noel Grant could have done nothing, for all his boats were riddled. Moreover, he had to keep the *Carmania* before the wind, and every available hand was needed to get the fire under. To add to his anxieties a patch of smoke, followed soon after by the outline of a cruiser, was sighted on the horizon. The *Carmania* was in no condition for another conflict, particularly with one of the roving cruisers of Von Spee's squadron, and it was fortunate that she managed to escape. On the following day she fell in with H.M.S. *Bristol*, which stood by her until she was relieved by H.M.S. *Cornwall* and escorted into harbour for repairs.

The *Carmania's* casualties were light considering the nature and length of the action.

Daring Deeds

They numbered nine killed, five severely injured, and twenty-one slightly wounded. Two hundred and seventy-nine officers and men of the *Cap Trafalgar* were landed at Buenos Aires from the collier.

No officer more richly deserved the praise of a First Lord of the Admiralty than Captain Noel Grant, who received the following telegram from Whitehall: "Well done! You have fought a fine action to a successful finish." In the succeeding New Year Honours List, the C.B. was awarded to him, and also to Captain James Barr, R.N.R., who was present at the fight and commanded the *Carmania* previous to the outbreak of hostilities. It will be recollected that the latter rendered splendid help in connexion with the rescue of the passengers from the burning emigrant ship *Volturno*. Four Distinguished Service Crosses and twelve Distinguished Service Medals were awarded to members of the crew.

A year before the outbreak of war Mr Winston Churchill had remarked that "the proper reply to an armed merchantman is another merchantman armed in her own

The "Carmania's" Duel

defence." The duel between the *Carmania* and the *Cap Trafalgar* abundantly justified his opinion. Incidentally it showed that a disturbance at dinner is not necessarily a bad omen.

CHAPTER II

The Raider and the 6-Pdr.

"The magnificent fight shown by the 'Clan MacTavish' fills us in the Grand Fleet with admiration."—LORD JELlicoe.

PREVIOUS to the war—and to some of us that seems a long time ago—the old sea-dog cherished no unhealthy suspicions about the identity of passing craft on the broad Atlantic. They were British, American, Dutch, Norwegian, Italian ; liners, tramps, colliers, tanks, as the case might be. Of what was stowed below their hatches Jack cared little and thought less. As a general rule the ships were what they appeared to be. As for cargoes, honesty was the best policy, certainly on recognized trade routes. Customs and other inquisitive port officials saw to that.

There came a time when some vessels looked what they were not. That time followed the outbreak of insanity known as the Great War. Mystery Ships appeared. Far more

The Raider and the 6-Pdr.

tangible than the *Flying Dutchman*, yet almost as elusive, these corsairs added victim after victim to their death-roll before they themselves were rounded up and dealt with in "a way they have in the Navy."

Dirty-looking members of the species Tramp proved on closer acquaintance to have unhealthy weapons beneath tarpaulins, guns hidden behind flaps or sides that let down with surprising ease, and wheel-boxes that were dummies for the concealing of wicked muzzles. Such a deceiver was S.M.S. *Möwe*.

If we take the story that one of her men told a British apprentice who happened to have the misfortune to be taken prisoner, she left Kiel on the 27th December, 1915, disguised as a Norwegian steamer. There is reason to believe that her original name was the *Ponga*, and that in peace she was a fruit trader. It is not difficult for German craft to cruise in German territorial waters protected by minefields ; it is another matter upon the open seas.

How the *Möwe* managed to elude the lynx-eyed British light cruisers, destroyers, and

Daring Deeds

patrols which live and move and have their being in northern mists and elsewhere, may never be known. It is thought that a snow-storm aided and abetted her escape as she hugged the rugged Norwegian coast. Forthwith began a long series of sinkings, burnings, and captures that was to beat the record of the *Emden* on the other side of the world. Fifteen vessels, aggregating 53,000 tons, fell to her in a couple of months. She was the most successful of German raiders.

Her armament consisted of a 4-in. gun within the false wheel-box aft, two 7-in. guns in the fore part of the vessel, two of the latter calibre in the fore part of the well deck, and two more inside the poop. She also had two torpedo tubes, which proved useful on occasion. Half a dozen 7-in. guns and one of 4 in. made a formidable battery. Instead of the respectable neutral vessel which her outward and visible appearance indicated to the unsuspecting, the *Möwe* was a veritable floating fortress, with an ample supply of munitions of war available for instant service.

There have been many fights against over-

The Raider and the 6-Pdr.

whelming odds, but not many in mid-Atlantic to compare with the fight of the *Clan MacTavish* with the *Möwe* on the 16th January, 1916.

Romantic surroundings are fine additions to a story. There is no background of palm trees and jungle like that which adds such a glow to the *Königsberg* incident in the Rufiji River, or the end of the *Emden* on Cocos Keeling Island. The setting of our narrative is merely that of the drab wilderness of waters, so familiar to the mariner on the long ocean trail.

The *Clan MacTavish* carried a general cargo of 10,000 tons, a nice haul for the Huns could they take her as a prize to Germany. This was wellnigh impossible, of course. On the other hand, it would be cause for elation if they succeeded in preventing her merchandise from reaching England. After all, that was what chiefly mattered.

The *Möwe* was watching and waiting like the spider in the poem. Trade had been good—nefarious trade, that is to say. The pirate was prospering. The commander was

Daring Deeds

doubtless enjoying the unenviable notoriety he had obtained. This was almost as terrible as his name—Captain Count von und zu Dohna-Schlodien, according to German newspapers.

The *Clan MacTavish* came along late in the afternoon. Poets may sing the praises of the gloaming, but it is a bit of a nuisance at sea. It means low visibility, a condition which was Admiral Sir John Jellicoe's worst enemy at Jutland. There were only two vessels on the sky-line. One of them, judging by her lines, was English; the other almost certainly was 'made in Germany.'

The English sailors kept a sharp look-out on the movements of the stranger, for when there is a war on 'one never knows.' She might be a prize ship engaged in the British Merchant Service or an escaped interned vessel from the States. When she was appreciably nearer the Mystery Ship sent a message by morse code. It was a request for the name of the English vessel.

The captain of the *Clan* liner made no reply, and on being asked a second time, repeated

The Raider and the 6-Pdr.

the other's question : " What is *your* name ? " " *Author*, from Liverpool," came the answer. Then, and not till then, the *Clan MacTavish* made her identity known.

A moment afterwards dirty work began. Eight words were flashed out by the inquisitive stranger : " Stop at once. I am a German cruiser." Captain Oliver " was not having any." He also was armed. It is true the weapon mounted on the stern of his ship was only for firing 6-pdr. shells ; useful enough against submarine attack, and possibly of valuable assistance now. How was he to know that his adversary had seven guns, each more powerful than his own ? He could at least try—the peculiar genius of the Britisher, as is also that of not counting costs—to down this wolf in sheep's clothing.

In military battles generals have a way of making an attack on one part of the enemy's line while delivering the main blow elsewhere. The captain of the *Clan MacTavish* played a similar game of bluff. While sending a message that he had stopped, his engines were working up to their maximum speed. Oliver

Daring Deeds

was not the type of man quietly to surrender to a horde of ruffians cruising about under false pretences—and he had his 6-pdr. !

The *Möwe* was at a standstill, preparing to board her easy capture. This gave the *Clan MacTavish* a start. Unfortunately the gain was only small, for when it became evident that “Stopped” was really “Full steam ahead,” the cruiser lost no time in giving chase. All too soon they were on a parallel course, with only three hundred yards of blue water between them.

A shell shrieked across the bows of the liner. This was followed by a second and a third, both of which did damage. The *Möwe* had got the range, and at first made good practice. Then the Germans, amazed at a reply to their fire, began to aim rather wildly. The two gunners of the *Clan MacTavish* pounded away with their little quick-firer, and kept hard at it for twenty minutes. Warm work, that. It was not a contest of giants, but a pigmy fighting a Gulliver. Not until the fo’c’s’le head had been damaged, the windlass smashed, two rooms demolished, and a

The Raider and the 6-Pdr.

gaping hole rent in the top of the engine-room did Captain Oliver realize that he was hopelessly outclassed. Sixteen of the seventy-three lascars on the ship were lying dead; four were wounded. To continue meant conniving at murder on the high seas. He signalled that the *Clan MacTavish* had stopped.

In due course an officer and a number of armed men from the *Möwe* clambered up the side of the vessel to take prisoners. The lascars who happened to be on deck were sent below to await further orders; twenty-two British seamen were lined up, each with the muzzle of a Mauser pistol pointed at him. The barrels of the stubby little weapons looked clean; the guard vindictive.

When Captain Oliver was asked why he had fought the *Möwe* he bluntly answered that his 6-pdr. had not been put in the ship for ornament. The German mind is supposed to revel in facts, and one hopes that this obvious admission was duly appreciated.

The crew were then told to take to the boats. Some were directed to the cruiser, others to the second ship that had been sighted

Daring Deeds

previous to the conflict. When these others were drawing near to the latter the name on her bows gave food for reflection. It was *Appam*. Now the *Appam* was an Elder Dempster liner plying between West Africa and England. No reason to ask why she was there. That day one of her broken boats was picked up by a passing ship somewhere between Madeira and Gibraltar, and it was believed that the ocean or the Huns had claimed another victim. The British sailors who were now interned on board of her were mightily pleased to know that the report, like that of Mark Twain's death, was "greatly exaggerated."

One can only dimly appreciate what it must mean to be an unwilling passenger on a marauding vessel, an Ishmaelite of the ocean, whose hand is raised against every other man's. Later fights might be attended by less success for the *Möwe*. Moreover, the silent British Navy was not sleeping; at any moment a long grey hull might appear on the horizon and avenging guns be heard. Captor and captured might be overwhelmed together.

Armed sentries were posted, and the

The Raider and the 6-Pdr.

prisoners were told that disobedience to orders would be punished by death. They heard the *Clan MacTavish* blow up as they were seated in a state-room of the *Appam*. It was not a pleasing sound, though they were thankful to be spared the sorrow of witnessing their old ship's destruction. What 7-in. guns had failed to achieve was accomplished by bombs.

On the following day the prisoners were transferred to the *Möwe*, and assured that a similar fate would befall that vessel if there was any likelihood of her being captured. Her crew would never surrender, so they said. Probably some of the listeners were of opinion that they might not have the opportunity. Whichever way it might be, the idea was not a pleasant one for reflection in a stuffy cabin.

Under ordinary conditions—that is to say, when there was nothing doing in the way of piracy—the captives were allowed to take the air on the deck for an hour in the morning and a similar period in the afternoon. When the *Möwe* was engaged in her fell work they

Daring Deeds

were kept below. That was the most terrifying experience of all, for the guns made a horrible din, and not the slightest information was available as to the nature of the adversary. With each capture the accommodation was naturally reduced, and eventually there was rather more than an awkward squeeze. Rye bread, with butter or honey, was the staple diet.

When the *Westburn* was captured, some 200 prisoners were transferred to her, most of them putting their names to a paper engaging not to take any further part in the war. The document, of course, was worthless, for an agreement signed under threat is no agreement at all. Captain Oliver and his two stalwart gunners were not included in this arrangement. The Germans evidently considered them to be far too dangerous to be at large.

Six Germans and an officer accompanied the prison ship to Teneriffe. This was the beginning of a new series of troubles. Most of the crew were Greeks, who positively refused to have anything to do with the

The Raider and the 6-Pdr.

working of the ship. As a consequence, the captive engineers were forced to lend a hand and take watches in turn. Rations were so reduced that there was scarcely enough food to keep body and soul together.

A British cruiser was lying in Teneriffe harbour, but as the new-comer was flying the German flag and within territorial waters she could only look on. After the captives were landed the *Westburn* was scuttled. In due course the sailors were taken to Tilbury by a Royal Mail steamer, and the men of the *Clan MacTavish* must have been more than satisfied when they learned of the appreciation of their gallant conduct expressed by ' Silent John ' of the British Navy.

CHAPTER III

Crime on the High Seas

"The country never really appreciates what it owes to the officers and men of the Mercantile Marine."—ADMIRAL LORD BERESFORD.

NEVER, we are told on excellent authority, is a long day, yet one doubts whether the brutal practices of the modern pirates are likely to be forgiven by the officers and men of the British Merchant Service. They may be erased when the sea dries up, scarcely before. It does not very much matter to us whether History blunders or records truth as to Nero's fiddling while Rome was burning. Its significance lies in the fact that the legend, if legend it be, has clung to his name for eighteen centuries, and serves to perpetuate an unenviable career. Clio has a retentive memory. Evidence of the crimes of German U-boat commanders is based on something more stable than tradition, and eighteen hundred years may not suffice to

Crime on the High Seas

blot out the infamy of the Huns on the high seas. Nero in sou'-wester and oilskins would make a capital companion figure to the benailed wooden statue of Tirpitz. Many a commander of an enemy submarine leaves a bitter heritage of hate for those who shall come after him.

So many abominable things have been done by those who sail under the German ensign, that it would be an easy task to compile a catalogue of terror. Some officers seem to take a fiendish delight in giving full play to those primæval and savage instincts which seem to be so near the surface of the average Hun. To sink a man's ship and cast him and his crew adrift in an open boat is too often deemed insufficient punishment for brave men.

Even the preliminary shot across the bows is frequently dispensed with. An ugly brute of a submarine, cunningly disguised as a torpedo boat by means of a dummy funnel, made its noisome presence known to the Granton trawler *Cruiser* one Sunday afternoon in May, 1915. The fishing-boat carried nine men in all, intent on legitimate business. Of these, only a

Daring Deeds

solitary member escaped whole, two being killed, two mortally wounded, and four injured. The undersea craft merely hoisted the flag of dishonour and immediately opened fire on her helpless prey.

Skipper Alexander Palmer was in the wheel-house, and was the first victim. Less than a minute later the little structure was entirely shattered. Not a plank stood in place. Shrapnel spread red ruin among the men working aft, while a third shot went through one side of the vessel, pierced the boiler, and made its exit at the other side. Nearly a dozen rounds were fired before the commander was satisfied with his fell work. Yet there was no resistance on the part of the unarmed trawler. As a finishing touch to his inhumanity the German officer jeered as the sad little boatload left their floating home.

It was sad enough, in very truth. Of the seven survivors, two were dying, and the cold north-easterly wind of the two long nights that were spent on the open sea bit into the wounds of the injured men. There was neither a ship's biscuit nor a drop of water to appease

Crime on the High Seas

hunger or assuage thirst. For thirty-seven hours the boat was at the mercy of waves and weather before it attracted the attention of a passing cargo steamer. Five living men were lifted out. Their two comrades were lying stiff and still.

U 39 has, or had, a particularly bad record. One morning, after having sunk the s.s. *Caucasian* off the Scillies, she made off in the direction of another steamer. This gave the men of the former vessel an opportunity to slip away. About three hours afterward they were fortunate enough to come across the Runciman liner *Inglemoor*. The unwritten law of humanity dictates respect for a shipwrecked crew. While the refugees were being taken on board, U 39 reappeared and opened fire, with the result that the rescuing ship was perforce abandoned, and those who were engaged in the task of saving others found themselves in similar plight to those whom they had essayed to help.

The crew of the s.s. *Eston*, torpedoed 600 miles off the Cornish coast, made the acquaintance of a commander who was evi-

Daring Deeds

dently an unqualified believer in Tirpitzian frightfulness. The officers and crew of the steamer were left to their fate in two small boats. When the captain politely requested "a tow," loud laughter and jeers were the only answer. In this case the ship gave the men on the submarine the maximum of trouble, which was some consolation, if only slight, to the poor fellows who watched her sink, and felt perfectly certain that their frail craft would soon share her fate. A torpedo and nine shots were necessary to compass the ship's destruction, and even then she seemed loth to surrender. The reason was peculiar and almost unique. The vessel was loaded with clay, which more or less automatically filled up the smaller holes made by the missiles. She clung to life with dogged tenacity for over two hours. As for her crew, it was nine hours before their sufferings were ended. Then a British ship hove in sight and eventually landed them at Lisbon.

Another commander who was an officer, but certainly not a gentleman, bawled out to those on the Cardiff steamer *Northlands* to "Clear out," and evidently being in a hurry,

Crime on the High Seas

gave them two minutes to do so. Unlike certain other pirates, however, he had sufficient humanity to fire his torpedo after his abrupt order had been obeyed. Captain Taylor and his anything but merry men were at the mercy of the waves for seven hours. In one of the boats a shirt was fastened to a boat-hook as a signal of distress. This was noticed by the look-out of a Belgian steamer, and very nearly succeeded in bringing about a tragedy instead of a rescue. The captain of the ship—it was the *Topaz*, which signifies little because the name is a familiar one on the sea for many kinds of craft—at first mistook the quaint-looking object for the conning-tower of a submarine cruising awash. He was on the point of putting his engines “Full steam ahead” with the idea of sinking the sea-rat, when he discovered what it was. Otherwise there would have been a sadder tale to tell, although the story is tragic enough, for the twenty-four poor fellows were well-nigh exhausted when they were brought up on deck.

Fortunately, though the majority behave

Daring Deeds

like blackguards, some of the pirates temper their crime with mercy. Several have been almost as polite to their victims as the traditional Frenchman in peace time. A few have endeavoured to be humorous, after the ponderous manner of the Teuton, which nearly always suggests the jester's bladder suspended by a string from the end of a stick.

An officer who did not believe in exaggerated frightfulness was cruising off the east coast of Scotland when he came upon an Aberdeen trawler. The day's work was done, and the fishermen were busily engaged in hauling their gear, when the U-boat appeared from the depths. The commander yelled through a megaphone in guttural English that the crew had fifteen minutes to pack up their effects, stow any provisions they might require in the ship's boat, and get away. While this was being done, the skipper was taken on board the submarine until his crew were ready to push off. Then he was released with the injunction to row his boat as far as possible from the *Scottish Queen*, as she was to be sunk by gunfire. All eventually were saved.

Crime on the High Seas

A Lowestoft fishing smack named the *Qui Vive* was sunk with bombs in the company of three others. An officer of the submarine vouchsafed the information that "You Englishmen wanted war; we did not want it," which was news to Skipper Albert James. Then after a few questions, the commander politely requested the master to give the ship's owner his "friendly greetings," and proceeded on further nefarious business.

Another officer did much the same as the man who ran into a lamppost and then kicked it for obstructing his path. He got hold of the flag of the Leith steamer *Glitra*, tore it up, and then treated it as a doormat. A crew in an open boat covered by a quick-firing gun is not in exactly the best position for retaliating, but they nearly choked with suppressed fury. They could do nothing, and that is the hardest of all things to bear at such a time.

The underwater Hun who carried on conversation with the mate of the *Ben Cruachan* was of more equable temper. The scene was the Irish Sea. Before getting to business he politely asked the nature of the cargo.

Daring Deeds

“Coal,” replied the Englishman, none too pleased with his genial visitor. “Then I am afraid you must go up,” was the significant reply, accompanied by an equally significant pointing of the fingers in the direction of the sky.

When he stepped on board the steamer the commander saluted the mate, expressed his sorrow at the task he had in hand, mentioned the fairly obvious fact that “war is war”—sometimes it is murder—and regretted that he must ask the men to vacate the vessel in ten minutes. He then proffered the advice that they should take what personal belongings they could, together with any money they might possess. As the poor fellows rowed away the crew of the underwater craft lined the deck and saluted. Then the *Ben Cruachan* blew up, and U 21 went down.

The latter was awash about a couple of hours later and repeated much the same performance, this time with a little coasting vessel of about 200 tons—not much in size as ships go, but useful nevertheless. This time cigarettes and cigars were distributed to the men, and

Crime on the High Seas

a pair of old gloves presented to the captain's little nephew.

The same genial brigand of the high seas, by the way, was responsible for the sinking of the light cruiser *Pathfinder*.

Our next story contains some vexatious details. Things might have happened differently. The good ship *Delmira*, of Liverpool, was in the English Channel, making her way from Boulogne to a western port. One day, at a time when most English landsmen are having breakfast, up popped a submarine and bade her heave-to. Captain Lancefield preferred to make a bid for freedom, and telegraphing to the engine-room for "Full speed ahead," prepared to give the enemy a little morning exercise, which is liable to be irritating to a pirate with a heavy list of prospective engagements. Unfortunately the black squad below were not British. They were Chinamen, and inhabitants of the Yellow Kingdom do not possess a reputation for bravery at sea. Somehow they got to know of the presence of the enemy, and forthwith they swarmed on deck and went on strike.

Daring Deeds

There were only eight white men, including officers, all told. In ordinary circumstances the minority would have quelled the rabble, and sent them back to their work in double quick time. Now all chance of escape was lost.

The game was up, and so unfortunately was the submarine—up alongside. The Chinese accepted with alacrity the invitation of the U-boat commander to take to the boats, and in due course were followed by the Englishmen, who manifested considerably less eagerness to abandon their ship. Then the expected happened, followed by the unexpected. No one was surprised when the *Delmira* was torpedoed; certainly none expected hospitality. Wine was proffered, and refused, but the offer of a tow was accepted. For an hour and a half the submarine acted as a tug; then the commander of the U-boat sighted a large ship, cast off, and descended to the nether regions. Why he did not attempt to destroy the vessel on the horizon is known only to himself. At all events, the new-comer proved to be a British ship, the *Lizzie*. She

Crime on the High Seas

took the representatives of the families of John Bull and John Chinaman on board, and landed them safely in the Isle of Wight.

The methods adopted by commanders of enemy submarines to secure their victims are various. If the "coast is clear," which means that there are no patrol boats about, they will stalk their prey for hours. This happened with the Brixham trawler *Onward*. The master, Mr Edward Davis, was on the verge of starting his trawl some twenty-five miles south-west of Start Point, when he saw something come to the surface. This proved to be the conning-tower of a submarine, notwithstanding that there was a heavy sea running at the time.

Nothing daunted, the trawler approached the visitor. The commander of the submarine, however, had more important fish to fry, for the Middlesbrough steamer *Lockwood*, of 1143 tons, had also hove in sight. The latter was promptly ordered to heave to, but instead of slowing down she put on speed, to the infinite disgust of the Hun. She zigzagged along so that the submarine found it difficult to take

Daring Deeds

decent aim, and led the pursuer a fine how-do-you-do. The bold manœuvre all but succeeded. The captain eluded the submarine for no fewer than seven hours, and it cost the U-boat three torpedoes before the chase was brought to an end. The third missile struck the *Lockwood* abaft the engine-room, and was followed by a terrific explosion. Her crew of twenty-two clambered into a boat, and although they had hard and difficult work to keep it afloat owing to the stormy weather, they managed to do so until the *Onward* rescued them. They were subsequently transferred to a patrol boat and landed at Brixham.

In another case, that of the s.s. *Ailsa*, of Leith, the enemy kept the ship under observation for an hour before calling upon her to stop. The submarine commander was probably running short of torpedoes, for he sent men to the vessel and set fire to it. Some officers do not even take the trouble to put a shot across the bows of an intended victim. They either give no warning or fire a rifle. Perhaps the most sparing type is the commander who opens the sea-cocks of his prey

Crime on the High Seas

and lets her sink without further molestation from himself.

That the average U-boat does her work all too well must be admitted. Nevertheless there are exceptions. One particular submarine, apparently of an old type because she only possessed a solitary 3-pdr. gun, whereas the latest specimen mounts a weapon firing a shell weighing 34 pounds, swooped down on the Grimsby trawler *Pacific*. The gunner was not particularly successful in his aim. The tactics pursued by the skipper had probably much to do with it. He steadfastly avoided giving his adversary a broadside target by keeping his vessel head on to her, which is a seafaring way of saying that he kept her nose pointed at the submarine.

When the trawler got too near to the submarine to be healthy, skipper and crew took to the boat. The ugly tin fish looked its evil part as it drew nearer. At last it was so close that anything said could have been heard without difficulty. The commander beckoned to the seamen to come closer. They must have felt very doubtful of his intentions, but

Daring Deeds

they were absolutely ignored. Not a word was spoken. The U-boat changed her course, and approached within about 800 yards of the trawler. Again the 3-pdr. let fly, and again there were only splashes in the water. Such a lamentable lack of marksmanship must have been particularly galling to the Germans, Their spectators were of the hated island race whose sons are the finest naval shots in the world.

After firing twenty-one rounds, the trawler remained afloat, bidding defiance to the 3-pdr. The gunner was still bent on sinking her when a British patrol-boat came in sight. The submarine quickly submerged, and the crew returned to their vessel, not at all dissatisfied with the sport, and certainly unconvinced of the boasted superiority of German guns and gunners.

CHAPTER IV

“Stop, or I Fire!”

“Invincible courage and immaculate integrity are not dependent on the folly of ministers or on the events of war.”—HORACE WALPOLE.

THE submarining of the unarmed Elder Dempster liner *Falaba* on the 28th March, 1915, has several points of special interest.

First, it was cited in one of the numerous American Notes, and was consequently a contributing factor in bringing Uncle Sam to a decision to enter the war on the side of the Allies. Second, the commander of the attacking craft graciously gave his word that five minutes would be allowed for the purpose of removing passengers and crew. Third, the German officer lied, and fired the torpedo before the appointed time-limit was up, and while many remained on the vessel. Fourth, the enemy jeered at drowning men and women. Fifth, the foresight of Skipper George Wright,

Daring Deeds

of the steam drifter *Eileen Emma*, spared the death roll a goodly number of names, while other small fry also lent a helping hand. Sixth, the *Falaba* was the first passenger ship to be torpedoed.

The liner, of 4806 gross tons register, was sunk about fifty-five miles west of St Anne's Head, off the Pembrokeshire coast, while on a voyage to Sierra Leone. Of the 242 souls on board, 147 were passengers. She had only left Liverpool the night previous to her loss, and as a snowstorm had marked the occasion, it would scarcely be a stretch of the imagination to assume that the majority of her population were looking forward to seeing the West Coast of Africa.

When the submarine was 'spotted' she was about three miles distant. Some witnesses declare that she was flying the white ensign, which was afterwards lowered and the German flag shown. The captain offered no resistance, though an attempt was made to outdistance the enemy craft. He sent the third officer below to urge the chief engineer to get every ounce of energy out of the ship. The response

“*Stop, or I Fire!*”

was immediate, but the *Falaba* was not built for record breaking, and all too soon it became painfully evident that she was second in the race. The pirate was gaining. Meanwhile the course was altered so as to bring the submarine dead astern.

When called upon to stop and abandon ship, Captain Fred Davis summoned all his passengers on deck and ordered them to put on lifebelts. The crisis had come, and he faced it without fear for himself. His one thought was for the lives of those in his charge and the safety of the ship. “Stop, or I will fire into you,” the enemy signalled, and the captain, having no alternative but to obey, brought the vessel to a standstill. An inkling of what had passed in his mind may be gathered from his instructions to the third officer. While the latter was in the engine-room he was to burn a bag of dispatches that there might be no possibility of state secrets falling into the hands of the Germans, should the worst happen. This had been faithfully carried out.

The passengers were told to take to the boats.

Daring Deeds

The first was upset, possibly because some of those who had been left behind took fright and jumped into it before it had reached the water. It is not easy to ascertain the facts of a moment like this, when strange and terrible things are happening. Tragedies of the sea are usually not long adorning. In such affairs the mind acts quicker than the eyes, and the mental photograph taken is apt to be distorted when developed by memory. The consequence is that often enough the accounts of trustworthy folk vary very considerably, though the eye-witnesses may have been standing within a yard of each other. Other boats were got out. The sea was choppy, and three of them were swamped. Four got away safely.

The torpedo was fired without warning, at point-blank range, and before there had been sufficient time for all to leave the doomed liner. Her track was through the struggling folk in the water, numbering possibly one hundred. One life-boat full of passengers was on the point of being lowered at the moment of impact. The explosion was so terrific that the davits snapped and the boat crashed down



The Sinking of the S.S. "Falaba"
Cecil King

“*Stop, or I Fire!*”

and overturned. The deadly weapon had struck amidships, near the wireless room; there was no hope for the ship. Within about twelve minutes the sea had opened and swallowed her up.

One cannot perceive humour in such a situation. Yet the khaki-clad pirates of U 28 laughed at the spectacle, and jeered at the struggling mass of humanity engulfed about them or dropping into the icy sea from the overhanging steamer. They lined the deck of the sub—to use the shortened form of the Service—keeping a gun trained on the wreck meanwhile. As soon as the *Falaba* had gone down the grey wolf made off in the direction of another steamer.

In an attempt to palliate his foul deed, Commander Schmidt said that his men were crying. They must have been crocodile tears, for on the previous day the same submarine had killed three men in an open boat by shrapnel fire.

Both passengers and crew showed cool courage. There was no panic. One lady, uncertain whether to stick to the ship or get

Daring Deeds

into a boat, had the problem solved for her by a quartermaster. He just took her in his arms and threw her overboard. It was a drastic measure, but it saved her life. Willing hands clutched at her and dragged her into a passing boat. Many people undoubtedly died from exposure. The torpedo actually passed beneath one of the boats. One man was swimming and floating for three hours before being rescued.

Many brave deeds brighten the tragedy of the *Falaba*. True to a time-honoured tradition, Captain Fred Davis remained on the bridge, and went down with his ship. Almost his last act was to assist a lady passenger from the boat deck to the poop deck and see that she was accommodated in one of the boats. He then ran the house flag up at the masthead, and endeavoured to attract the attention of trawlers in the vicinity.

When the *Falaba* took her final plunge, Captain Davis came to the surface, was picked up with the aid of a boathook, and died shortly afterward. He had the ship's papers tightly clasped in one of his numbed

“*Stop, or I Fire!*”

hands. Captain Fred Davis was a nobleman of the British Mercantile Marine.

A number of the officers and crew “sacrificed their lives in preserving those of the passengers,” to quote a telegram sent to the owners by one who was rescued. An officer stayed behind to take photographs. Another stood talking until the vessel was on her beam ends. He then walked down into the sea, and was subsequently rescued. The chief cook supported a steward on an awning pole for nearly an hour.

The Marconi operator was fully alive to his responsibilities. When he was told that a submarine was overhauling the *Falaba*, he sent a message to the station at Land’s End, and requested that it should be passed on to a battleship. He communicated again, adding, “Torpedo; going boats.” Although the submarine had not then fired, it was fairly obvious that she had every intention of doing so. Such foresight is to be commended.

Skipper Wright, of the *Eileen Emma*, saw the pirate an hour before she came up with the liner, and did his best to follow in the hope of ramming her. Opportunity failed him, though

Daring Deeds

he got to within 200 yards of the submarine. He searched the neighbourhood of the wreck for two and a half hours, and with his brave comrades picked up 116 people. It is pleasing to be able to add that Skipper Wright and his crew were presented with a cheque for £125 by Messrs Elder, Dempster & Co. They also received £100 from a naturalized German "who wished to show his abhorrence of German methods of warfare." The skipper of the drifter *Wenlock*, attracted by the noise of the explosion, picked up eight persons, and *Orient II* also assisted in a similar way.

In giving his judgment at the official inquiry into the loss of the *Falaba*, Lord Mersey said that while he was not called upon to state whether the submarine was within her rights in sinking the liner, he assumed in any event she was bound to afford men and women reasonable opportunity of getting to the boats and saving their lives. His lordship characterized the time-limit as "grossly insufficient," and concluded that the German commander desired and designed to sink the ship and sacrifice those on board. The German Embassy

“*Stop, or I Fire!*”

at Washington, acting on instructions from Berlin, alleged that, as British merchant ships had been provided with guns and advised to ram or otherwise attack enemy submarines, “military necessity consequently forced the submarine to act quickly, which made the granting of a longer space of time and the saving of life impossible.” The statement has no bearing whatever on the case. The *Falaba* was unarmed, she made no attempt to attack the enemy, and far from being pressed for time, the submarine made off in the direction of another likely victim.

One of the witnesses at the Inquiry was a deck-boy named Duncan Irvine. In calm, even tones he told the Court that after the sinking of the *Falaba* he went home for a week, and ‘then shipped on board another vessel, which was also torpedoed.

“Are you going to sea again?” asked Lord Mersey.

“Oh, yes,” answered the witness.

This is the spirit that will maintain British maritime supremacy. Happy the nation which breeds such lads.

CHAPTER V

Through Uncharted Waters

"It is no time to fear, but rather to haste to prevent that which is feared."—SIR FRANCIS DRAKE.

THERE was once a sea-king of Devon named Francis Drake, a very gallant gentleman and the first son of England to gaze on the Pacific, who burnt, cut out, and sunk his Queen's enemies and his own, singed the King of Spain's beard, chased the Armada, and 'did exploits.' His last desperate adventure was treasure-seeking in the Mosquito Gulf, where, for all we know, his bones may still lie, though the sea received his body into her faithful keeping in the year of our Lord 1596.

'Tis said that his spirit watches over the old Homeland whenever England is in danger, that the roll of his drum is heard in Buckland Abbey and echoes along the shore. However true or fantastic this may be, the spirit of Drake is present in the story that

Through Uncharted Waters

follows. Here also the King's enemies were foiled, and the ship led through tortuous and uncharted waters in a manner worthy of the tenacious and fiery old mariner of Elizabethan times. It is a sixteenth-century yarn in a twentieth-century setting, minus culverins, minions, and sakers, but the more valorous by reason of the absence of their equivalent in latter-day armament.

The hero of the tale is Lieutenant Douglas Reid Kinneir, R.N.R., the first recipient of the Distinguished Service Cross, though at the time he was plain Mr Kinneir, master of the s.s. *Ortega*. Drake, it may be recollected, had his first experience of the rough and tumble of sea life as apprentice to the master of a small Channel coaster that traded with France and Holland. His father had fallen on evil days, and could offer his son no better prospect. It is probable that the erstwhile Reader of Prayers to the Royal Navy had once been a sailor himself. He certainly had no wish to prevent Francis from hearing and answering the call of the sea.

Lieutenant Kinneir's parent, on the contrary,

Daring Deeds

had very strong objections to his son's acknowledged ambition for a life on the element which most Britons regard as their own. Instead of merely saying "No," and possibly finding that the lad had disregarded his wish by running away to the nearest port, as many a boy has done, he endeavoured to check the desire in an essentially practical way. He would let him have his fling, feeling perfectly confident that Douglas would be only too thankful to return to hearth and home when the first voyage was ended. Accordingly he sent him for a voyage in a fishing vessel.

Now, if there is any craft capable of trying one's nerve and endurance, it is a ship engaged in the fishing industry, be it smack, trawler, drifter, or what not. There are no airs and graces as on a liner, merely downright discomfort, hard work, long hours, considerable danger, much exposure, and cramped quarters.

The boy returned from his trip neither disillusioned as regards a sailor's life nor enamoured of a landsman's calling. As cure No. 2 he was put in a brig for a year, and met with no worse mishaps than a couple of nasty falls from the

Through Uncharted Waters

yards. Henceforth his father abandoned all hope of weaning his son from his choice.

Young Kinneir made good progress in his profession. Enthusiasts always do. Eventually he became mate of a 'wind-jammer.' Not the least of his adventures during this phase of his career occurred on a voyage from Calcutta to Demerara. The captain was taken so ill that he was unable to attend to his duties, and it fell to Kinneir to navigate the vessel. As it happened, she encountered a terrific cyclone; but he got her safely through, though he was washed overboard during the struggle. In due course Kinneir transferred his affection from sailing ships to more modern vessels, and at the outbreak of war was master of the Pacific Steam Navigation Company's *Ortega*.

The liner was homeward bound from Valparaiso to England when Kinneir added a new and thrilling chapter to the romance of the British Mercantile Marine. She started her voyage on the 13th September, 1914—an unlucky date for the superstitious. Her passengers included 300 French Reservists

Daring Deeds

eager to fight for the Tricolour, some 'British boys,' to use the captain's own term, and a number of ladies. The Reservists were to disembark at La Rochelle-Pallice, the others at Liverpool.

The first port of call was Coronel, a place that will ever be associated with Sir Christopher Cradock's superb but unavailing fight against terrible odds.¹ Here the liner was coaled, and her noisome presence duly noted by two German steamers that happened to be there at the same time. These steamers were the *Luxor* and the *Nitokris*. The men on board the former greeted the passengers of the *Ortega* with the celebrated "Hymn of Hate" and various other popular Teutonic melodies of a similarly refined and friendly kind. The audience paid them back in their own coin, plus interest. Possibly they got a little more music than they bargained for. "God Save the King," "The Marseillaise," "Tipperary," and "Rule, Britannia," were

¹ I have detailed British and German naval operations in the South Pacific and South Atlantic in *Stirring Deeds of Britain's Sea-dogs in the Great War*, pp. 175-211.

Through Uncharted Waters

yelled across the intervening water in a way that gave full expression to the patriotic fervour of the singers. Thus was war waged with crotchets and quavers.

It would not be reasonable to suppose that the Germans confined themselves solely to this novel method of conflict. No doubt they communicated the interesting intelligence that a British liner was about to leave Coronel to those capable of dealing with the matter. The sequel certainly suggested it.

When the *Ortega's* bunkers were replenished no time was lost in getting under way. South American waters were very much in the war zone at that period. For two days all went well, no suspicious vessels were visible, and some at least of the passengers were disposed to think that they would reach their destination without so much as a passing glance at a unit of Von Spee's squadron.

On the third morning a tramp came lumbering along, with decks almost as black as a nigger and derricks rigged. Evidently she had recently been engaged in coaling or provisioning a vessel at sea. Her customer very

Daring Deeds

soon appeared—an ugly grey fellow with ten 4.1-in. quick-firers, eight 5-pdr. guns, and two submerged torpedo tubes. Dense volumes of smoke that hung behind like a low thundercloud were issuing from her rakish funnels. She was getting ready for business.

Captain Kinnear was close to the mouth of Nelson Strait, about seventy miles north of the western entrance of the romantic Strait of Magellan. He determined to make a run for it, though the *Ortega* was only a fourteen-knot boat. First of all he called for volunteers to help the black squad in the stokehold. The response was overwhelming and immediate. There was not a person on board who did not heartily applaud the officer's action. But Kinnear had a secret which was not in the keeping of his passengers. Stokers and volunteers, stripped to the waist, whipped up the engines to four knots in excess of their usual speed. Yet despite every effort, those on the look out could see the German cruiser growing bigger and bigger. Evidently she was gaining on the *Ortega*. It was a case of eighteen knots versus twenty-one knots.

Through Uncharted Waters

The ship had been keeping as close to the Chilian coast as possible, when suddenly the captain altered his course and steered for the entrance of the passage called Nelson Strait. The commander of the *Dresden* presumably saw through Kinneir's plan, for he opened fire with his two heavy bow guns in the hope of pulling him up. The *Ortega* neither slackened speed nor hesitated. There was no halting between two opinions, though the Strait was uncharted, and the British officer ran a terrible risk of 'piling her up' on the reefs. None of the shots struck home. They made everybody feel uncomfortable, then fell harmlessly into the sea.

When the *Dresden*, a sister ship of the more famous *Emden*, reached the channel, her commander deemed discretion the better part of valour. The waters were thought to be unnavigable for a large ship, and it was reasonably certain that the hare-brained British captain would speedily prove the truth of this. Why waste shell and cordite when a vessel was doomed to destruction?

Once clear of the cruiser the *Ortega* proceeded

Daring Deeds

at a snail's pace, following the tortuous and unknown route, impeded by shoals and rocks, and surrounded by mountains and cliffs that rose sheer from the water. A ship's boat preceded her as pilot. Soundings were taken at almost every yard ; so thoroughly was the work carried out that the ship did not so much as get a dent in her plates or a scratch on her paint. The superhuman efforts of the men at the furnaces, and the cool and calculating daring of the master on the bridge, had robbed the Germans for the time of what they thought was easy prey.

At nightfall the *Ortega* dropped anchor. There was nothing else to do, for one cannot navigate in strange waters in the dark ; few mariners care to do so in the light. The question was, Would the *Dresden* be waiting for the British liner when she made her return trip ?

The problem was settled the following morning as the ship slowly made her way back. Over the hills smoke could be seen that meant but one thing. The enemy was watching and waiting, the *Leipzig* in attendance.

Through Uncharted Waters

Instead of going ahead, Captain Kinneir played a second trick on the Germans. He took the *Ortega* down a narrow waterway which led to Smith Channel. The night was again spent at anchor. On the following day a fresh start was made, and in the evening the Strait of Magellan was reached. When the liner arrived at Punta Arenas the inhabitants were dumbfounded. Ill news is alleged to travel apace. It had certainly done so in this particular instance. Report had it that the liner had gone down with all hands, and here she was with her crew and passengers very much alive.

The *Dresden* and her consort were sure to be searching about, and early one morning shortly after they had left Punta Arenas it looked as though the *Ortega* had been caught after all. Suddenly from out the darkness huge shafts of light appeared like exaggerated flashes of lightning, followed by the boom of a gun and the screech of a shell. The shot went across the liner's bows. Frenchmen and Britons came helter-skelter on deck. The open sea has no land-locked passages down

Daring Deeds

which an intrepid captain can seek shelter. Everybody was fully prepared for the worst. What had happened was really the best. The searchlights were those of a British light cruiser, the *Glasgow*, destined to win renown in Sir Frederick Sturdee's battle off the Falkland Islands on the 8th of the following December, when the *Leipzig* went to her doom.¹ Soon afterward the *Monmouth* made her appearance, though it was some time before the passengers of the *Ortega* were fully satisfied that she was not the *Dresden*. The liner arrived at Rio de Janeiro on the 1st October, somewhat overdue but safe and sound. From there she made her way on her long voyage of over 5000 miles without further untoward incident.

The Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty placed on record their appreciation of "the courageous conduct" of Captain Douglas R. Kinneir, but a greater reward followed. The master of the *Ortega* became a Lieutenant,

¹ The *Dresden* escaped from the action. After being rounded up on the 14th March, 1915, near Juan Fernandez Island—associated with Robinson Crusoe—her magazine exploded.

Through Uncharted Waters

R.N.R., and had the honour of being the first seaman to be presented with the Distinguished Service Cross. The decoration was pinned on the gallant officer's breast by the King himself, who cordially shook hands with him. Further rewards were conferred by the Committee of the Liverpool and London War Risks Insurance Association, which voted him the sum of 100 guineas, and by the French Government, which presented him with a gold chronometer.

Listen ! It is Drake's drum beating a double roll for the heroes of Nelson Strait.

CHAPTER VI

Fishing for Canned Death

"Our success at sea has, in a great part, been attained by our fishermen, who man the mine-sweepers. They know the North Sea and all the seas around as a Londoner knows his London, or as a farmer knows his field. We did not realize what priceless service they would be able to render in time of war."—THE EARL OF SELBORNE.

IT was one of those cold grey days which neutralize every scrap of colour and turn everything into a hideous monotone. Neither sea nor sky gave relief. Both blended in an horizon that doubtless existed, though invisible. There was not the slightest indication of where the one ended and the other began.

The long rollers were coming up in a menacing way that boded ill for every mother's son who had business in great waters. Each wave flung itself in orderly succession against a dark Something that hindered progress, then dispersed what remained of its energy on the neighbouring shingle. There are many such

Fishing for Canned Death

Some things round the coast. Once trawler, then mine-sweeper, now wreck. That is their story in miniature, though the chapters are by no means identical.

In a war of such colossal magnitude that it dwarfs all previous conflicts, the loss of a humble unit of the King's Navy may seem of small account. One is so accustomed to reading this kind of announcement in the papers that it almost passes unnoticed :

The Secretary of the Admiralty announces :

"One of our mine-sweeping vessels of an old type struck a mine and sank on Tuesday. Twenty-four of the crew are missing. All the next-of-kin have been informed."

It is not much of an epitaph for brave men.

At the beginning of the war the mine-sweeping squadron consisted of 142 officers and 1136 hardy fishermen of the Royal Naval Reserve. Since then thousands of men and a multitude of ships have augmented the service. They alone make navigation possible. Without them the Germans would be able to blockade the British Isles in actual fact, for the mine is almost as dangerous to battleships

Daring Deeds

as to merchantmen. During the Russo-Japanese War, Russia lost fourteen and Japan ten warships by reason of the lurking peril. We ourselves have been robbed of the battleships *King Edward VII* and *Russell* from the same cause, without including those sunk in the Dardanelles operations.¹ If, as a citizen of Sydney wrote when sending a donation of £250 to a fund for providing comforts for the men of the mine-sweepers, "Their splendid work lacks battle's glories," let us remember that, beyond any other branch of the Navy, they play hide-and-seek with eternity. The pioneer, the fellow who blazes a trail, has obviously a rougher time than those who follow in his track.

It is not altogether without significance that the British Navy's preliminary stroke against the enemy was due to the watchfulness of a fisherman. He had observed the crew of a ship "throwing things overboard," as he put it, and promptly informed Captain Cecil

¹ It is not improbable that the majority of the battleships lost in these attacks were sunk by torpedoes fired from the shore. Further reference to the Dardanelles will be found on pp. 89-93.

Fishing for Canned Death

Fox, of H.M.S. *Amphion*. This led to the sinking of the *Königin Luise*, a small Hamburg-Amerika liner of about 2000 tons. She had been converted into a mine-layer, and began her nefarious work before the declaration of war. Nowadays the deadly eggs are frequently laid by submarines fitted with special apparatus for the purpose, although at first German vessels disguised as neutral traders or trawlers were largely employed. This partly accounts for the wide distribution of mines, which are met with far from the area of the pitiless North Sea. Possibly raiders, or neutrals who believe and prove that "every man has his price," are responsible for those found in the Gulf of Aden, at Colombo, off the Cape of Good Hope, and other spots beyond the range of Wilhelmshaven undersea craft.

The method of mine-sweeping is almost as simple as it is perilous. The mines are fished up by means of a weighted steel wire, often enough some 1400 yards in length, slung between two ships so as to catch the mooring-rope of the death-dealing canister. A little tugging is sufficient to indicate a bite. The

Daring Deeds

sweepers slowly diverge, and the mine rises to the surface. It is then dispatched by gun- or rifle-fire from the craft or an attendant patrol vessel. Another method of destroying a mine-field is by floating other mines in the area and then blowing the lot up, but the system previously described is the more general.

Incidentally it may be mentioned that the skipper of a trawler is usually not content with merely sweeping for mines. He gets through a lot of odd jobs when opportunity affords, from tackling submarines and picking his way through a danger zone to rescue ill-fated crews, to fighting men-of-war. The German torpedo boat A 6 was so badly handled by the trawler *Mauri*, of Cardiff, that she was compelled to give up the fight and run. This was a case of one small gun against several of larger calibre, no torpedo versus a good supply, and a stout bow against frail steel. There is at least one instance, and there may be more, of a dumpy little mine-sweeper limping into port after being attacked by submarines, aeroplanes, and destroyers—a

Fishing for Canned Death

whole company of things Satanic. She lost a funnel and the taffrail, had considerable damage done to her deck-house and sides, and is now "Quite well, thank you."

There is no more dangerous job in the war than fishing for submerged mines. You cannot dodge them like a torpedo. Sometimes the canister goes hunting, then it is a case of "Physician, heal thyself." H.M.M.S. *Night Hawk* came into contact with one while on duty ridding Scarborough South Bay of prize packets filled with trotyl which the Germans had flung overboard after their cowardly attack on the North-Eastern seaside resort. The mine-sweeper was from three and a half to four miles off the town, when she struck something which the skipper likened to a rubber ball because a deadening concussion followed. The explosion was so terrific that ten seconds later the vessel had entirely disappeared. There is not much time to ascertain facts in less than a quarter of a minute. Probably the entire bottom was blown to pieces, and the poor fellows below fell through into the water with the machinery. The more

Daring Deeds

fortunate members of the crew, including Harry Evans, the skipper, were hurled overboard or drawn under by the suction of the sinking vessel. Five went down with the ship—or, rather, what remained of her.

In a war in which so many plucky deeds have been performed that it would require an encyclopædia of bravery to mention a tithe of them, it is difficult to pick and choose. Courageous acts are being done daily and hourly. The extraordinary courage and coolness shown by Skipper Frederick Firth, of the steam trawler *Pelican*, is typical, though one doubts whether it could be rivalled. In hauling the fishing-gear an ugly object was brought up from the watery depth. It looked for all the world like a mammoth globe fish of the tropics, with spines all complete. A mine had become wedged between the trawl boards, and there it stuck, a murderous menace to men and ship alike. A blow on one of the spikes would be sufficient to detonate the affair and provide for the newspapers a paragraph of tragic interest.

The skipper neither hurried nor worried.

Fishing for Canned Death

At the same time he realized that he and his comrades were in an extremely awkward predicament. Any undue rolling of the vessel might mean an explosion, and the end of all things so far as the crew were concerned. If he tried to get rid of the beastly visitor with a boat-hook he would probably succeed only too well. Never was a man more literally on the horns of a dilemma ; in fact, the horns were his sole trouble.

Skipper Firth surveyed the situation and then decided to act. He had a solution that was possible, if not probable, but he had no wish to murder his men, as was likely if they stayed in or near the trawler. So he bade them take to the boat and pull out a good distance, in case—— There was much demur at this, but the skipper was obdurate. He had made up his mind, was captain of the ship, and had given his orders. Very reluctantly his companions tumbled into the small boat and rowed away, with these words ringing in their ears : “ If anything happens there’ll be only one chap lost.”

Then the solitary figure set to work, while

Daring Deeds

the watchers waited—at a safe distance, according to instructions. One miscalculation, a single slip, and the game would be up, skipper, ship, and mine included. The man was at the winch, lowering the gear, and with it the deadly thing.

So far so good, but the mere fact that the canister was in the sea whence it had come was no guarantee of safety. It had been there before, where its noisome presence had proved decidedly uncongenial. The skipper continued to unwind, thereby putting as much distance between the mine and the ship as possible.

He was still busy paying out the warp when there was a tremendous explosion. To this day nobody can tell why. It lifted up a mountain of sea and roared like a peal of thunder at close quarters. A mine containing 250 lb. of T.N.T. is not a plaything; it is calculated to make a noise in the world. The trawler did something more than tremble from stem to stern. She shook and rolled in the swirling waters until it seemed as though she must tear apart. Those in the little boat,

Fishing for Canned Death

the agonized spectators of what they concluded was an appalling tragedy, expected the *Pelican* to break in two. Rivets and plates and girders were never more severely tested. They held.

Skippers of trawlers do not usually wear a gold watch, but Skipper Frederick Firth has one. It was presented to him by representatives of the fishing industry of Grimsby. Pluck, a German mine, and the *Pelican* played their respective parts in contributing to the reason why.

Another notable instance of superb courage was shown by the commander of a motor-launch. The vessel was in attendance on a flotilla of mine-sweepers, a lieutenant of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve shepherding them, with a watchful eye on the horizon and another on the flock. As ill-luck would have it a mine was 'spotted' at the most inconvenient time, namely, when the day was yielding to night. One does not go fishing for canned death on the open sea in the dark unless bent on suicide. Yet to leave the infernal machine to drift about of its own

Daring Deeds

sweet will was to aid and abet the enemy and court disaster.

It was well out of range of rifle-fire, although repeated attempts had been made to dispatch it. The weather was characteristically North Sea-ish. High wind and big waves sufficiently guaranteed the impossibility of being able to pick up the German prize packet at dawn. Long before then it would have floated several miles, a wandering danger to all and sundry.

Quite rightly the lieutenant refused to allow the sweepers to continue their task. He launched a boat, flung a line in it, and rowed in the direction of the mine. When within comparatively easy distance of it he took hold of one end of the rope and jumped over-board. The death-trap was not going adrift if he could help it. He awaited his opportunity, and when it came he seized it. There was a ring-bolt on the top of the mine. He put out his arm, made a grab, and had his fingers through it. A delicate performance that, for had the swimmer hit one of the deadly horns his pluck would have availed

Fishing for Canned Death

him nothing, although the mine would have been removed readily enough.

To secure the mine was more difficult and no less dangerous, but our lieutenant managed it somehow or other. All the while swimmer and canister were riding the waves like a cork, up a mountain for a few seconds, and down in the abyss for a few more. Then with vigorous strokes the worthy descendant of a race of Vikings made for the boat, the success of his enterprise renewing exhausted energy. To take the line to the launch was the easiest task of all. The mine was gently towed away, and its potentialities for evil ended by a handy rifle. Then ensued cheering on the North Sea that neither wind nor tumbling billows could silence.

Nearly all the trawlers engaged in snatching death from the deep during the ill-fated Dardanelles naval operations hailed from English and Scottish fishing ports. If no modern Jason and his Argonauts fetched the coveted Golden Fleece from the shores of the Black Sea, the Allies certainly made a bold attempt. And no men worked harder or displayed more

Daring Deeds

courage than the mine-sweepers, upon whose vigilance both the fleet and the army depended.

On one occasion Captain Robert Woodgate, of the *Koorah*, proved himself a hero of heroes. The sweepers *Gwenllian* and *Manx Hero* were carrying on their beneficent work, when the latter was blown up. At once searchlights from the neighbouring Turkish forts flashed on the scene of the disaster, followed by a storm of shot and shell. Woodgate, who was returning to the base, thought only of the poor fellows struggling in the water. He brought his vessel as close to the spot as he dared, then called for volunteers to launch the boat. The boatswain and two deck hands jumped into it with alacrity, picked up the derelict crew of eleven, and brought them safely to the *Koorah*. Not one received so much as a scratch, though the boat was smashed to smithereens as it was being hauled on board. Woodgate then brought his ship safely out of the range of the enemy's fire, though he did it at terrible risk and after an hour spent in the most careful manœuvring.

Despite continuous mine-sweeping, carried

Fishing for Canned Death

on as though there were no resistance from the forts or the mobile batteries on shore, and interrupted only by exceptionally boisterous weather, mines sometimes eluded the vigilance of the scavengers. Two, for instance, were picked up in the open sea by merchant ships. More often than not the work was carried out at night under the protection of battleships, cruisers, and destroyers. Had there been no mines it is quite likely that some of the ships would have run the gauntlet and put the fear of the British Lion into the Turks at Constantinople. The farther the sweepers proceeded, the more dangerous their duty became owing to the formation of the coast, which bottle-necks very considerably, hence the name of the Narrows given to one part of the passage.

A correspondent of the *Paris Journal*, writing from Tenedos, furnishes us with a graphic picture of how the sweepers set about their operations :

“ Every afternoon,” he writes, “ generally about five o’clock, a certain agitation manifests itself among the fleet, and, almost at

Daring Deeds

the same instant, a dozen or so of the small craft, detailed for mine-sweeping, slip moorings and glide off to their dangerous work. They have hardly left their anchorage when three or four light and rapid destroyers shoot after them, then two or three cruisers, or armour-clads, file off in support. All take the direction of the Dardanelles. As soon as they arrive off the Strait, sharp flashes light up the horizon; it is the forts of Kum-Kale and Sedul-Bahr opening fire. But other detonations reach our ears of much greater power. The armoured ships are replying to the Turkish field guns, while the mine-sweepers and the destroyers are swallowed up in the Strait. The cruisers and armoured ships do not accompany them inside, but are content to mount guard over the channel that is lined with engines of death.

“ All night long the mine-sweepers are engaged in hunting out the mines laid by the enemy, and only at daybreak do they return, followed by their protectors, to their resting-place at the foot of Mount St Elias.

“ Sometimes, too, the *Queen Elizabeth*, as

Fishing for Canned Death

if tired of her immobility, hauls up her anchors and steams toward the Gulf of Saros. On each of these voyages the super-Dreadnought hurls a few of her enormous shells on Kilid-Bahr, and regularly, after each shot, immense columns of smoke shoot up from the fortress and mount into the sky, that is constantly furrowed by English airmen, whose camp is installed on the south of Tenedos."

Service such as this, carried out under the most perilous conditions, will not count as nought in History, even though it availed nothing from a practical point of view. There is might in worth, and sterling devotion to duty has a value all its own. Meanwhile the heroes of the Dardanelles who survived are 'carrying on' elsewhere. As for the others, "their works do follow them."

When the British seaman was a less suspicious person he was apt to be deceived by the fiendish wiles and subtleties of an enemy who had a penchant for trading on trickery. A derelict boat in the neighbourhood of a mine-field was a favourite trap. Dummy periscopes were fitted on mines, prompting ramming and

Daring Deeds

ensuring destruction. This plan had one obvious disadvantage in that the object 'bobbed,' which is the last thing a well-behaved submarine would do.

If the German people require a little heartening in the matter of the much-vaunted High Sea Fleet—and this has happened several times—the Press is brought into vigorous action. On these occasions many a Berlin journalist has proved to his own complete satisfaction that the pen is mightier than the sword. British battleships, cruisers, destroyers, and submarines have been blown up, sunk, torpedoed and wrecked in a sea of ink. Mines have played their part in these fierce newspaper contests, that ensure the total loss of mighty ships and the death of thousands of seamen at the cost of a little imagination and much paper. The cruisers *Shannon* and *Newcastle* were blown to bits in November 1916, and in the middle of the following February the *Donegal* was sunk by perfervid Teutonic scribblers.

Far more devilish in intention was the intelligence circulated by the officials of the

Fishing for Canned Death

German Embassy at Rome before Italy joined the Allies. It was stated that the North Sea routes to ports in Germany, Holland, and Denmark were "free from mines." As a matter of fact Germany had worked with feverish avidity to sow mines wherever shipping congregated.

"It was known," said the Earl of Selborne,¹ "that the Germans would make the mine one of their principal instruments, but we did not realize that the German Fleet would not dare to fight, and would resort to mines as almost its sole instruments. I do not know," he continued, "how many mines the Germans have sown round our coasts during the last eighteen months, but I am prepared to risk the statement that it is many, many thousands, of a most extraordinary ingenuity of construction, charged with an explosive calculated to destroy a most powerful ship, and to blow a small fishing craft to matchwood. Although we have had losses through mines, the German

¹ In a speech delivered on the 24th January, 1916, when the submarine menace was by no means so predominant as it is at the time of writing.

Daring Deeds

calculation of reducing our naval power has been upset.”

However short the public memory may be when the Conflict of the Nations is over, the people of Grimsby are not likely to forget the services of the mine-sweepers. Too many homes in the great fishing port mourn dear ones who died at sea that others might traverse it in safety. In addition, the Corporation of the town treasures a unique gift that will be an object-lesson to succeeding generations. It is an enemy mine mounted so that the deadly mechanism may be inspected. Its story is told in the following inscription :

This German mine was laid in the approaches to the River Humber, and was recovered by the crews of the Grimsby mine-sweeping trawlers in the prosecution of their daily duties. It was presented to the Corporation of Grimsby by Captain F. Massy-Dawson, R.N., Port Mine-sweeping Officer, in memory of those heroes who perished in the performance of their duty during the Great War, and as a memento of the patriotism and gallantry of all those seamen hailing from this great fishing port who undertook voluntarily the arduous and highly dangerous task of sweeping the seas.

CHAPTER VII

“Like English Gentlemen”

“World-power is inconceivable without striving for expression of power in the world, and consequently for sea-power.”—
LIEUT.-GENERAL BARON VON FREYTAG - LORINGHOVEN,
Deputy Chief of the German General Staff.

TYNDAREUS, in ancient Greek legend, was King of Sparta. In modern history the name is associated with a particularly worthy incident of the Great War. The Merchant Service and the Army shared alike in it, which is unusual. As a general rule they render mutual support at a distance. Jack carries Tommy on his back to and from work, takes supplies to him, keeps up his maritime communications, but the two are rarely comrades-in-arms. Jack has the monopoly of one element and Tommy of the other. It is a mutual arrangement, and it works well. That is the supreme test. On this occasion they fought shoulder to shoulder, and they waged silent warfare. Not a gun was fired nor a bayonet flashed.

Daring Deeds

The *Tyndareus* was a liner turned transport. Her passengers consisted of a battalion of the Middlesex Regiment, the successor of the 57th Foot that won glory on the bloody ridge of Albuera during the long Napoleonic struggle, and of the 77th that led the storming party into Seringapatam. The former was afterward known by the nickname of 'The Die-hards,' a designation that the men of 1917 worthily maintained under very different circumstances.

The ship was off Cape Agulhas, the southernmost point of Africa, on the night of the 9th February, 1917. A crimson sunset had given place to a silvery moon, and the men were preparing to turn in, when a mine struck the bows of the ship. The noise was deafening, the result tragic. Tons of water, hurled skyward by the terrific force of the explosion, poured down on the decks, for all the world as though the vessel had encountered a waterspout. To make matters worse, a strong south-easterly gale was blowing. For a moment faces looked anxious, but only for a moment. A bugle sounding 'The Assembly' rang out, telling

“ Like English Gentlemen ”

every man what was expected of him. Each responded without question. Discipline counts for much—and more. The ‘ Die-hards ’ buckled on their lifebelts, lined up on the now sloping deck, and answered to the Roll as though on parade at Aldershot.

A deeper voice sounded. It was that of Colonel John Ward, Labour M.P. for Stoke-on-Trent. “ Officers and men,” he said, “ you have now the supreme test of your lives, the one moment we all ought to have lived for. Remember that you are Englishmen. All the best traditions of our country and race are in your keeping. You are members of one of the most famous regiments in the British Army. Pray God you do not act in such a way as to sully its honour. Obey orders, and we may be able to save you all. But if we cannot, then let us finish like English gentlemen.”

The order “ Stand easy ” was given. The soldiers broke into song. Music has a marvellous power when men are gathered together at supreme moments ; it unites them in devotion and in the determination to achieve the last and greatest conquest ;

Daring Deeds

it draws them together and brings comfort to the soul.

Not far from where the *Tyndareus* was sinking the paddle-wheel troopship *Birkenhead* had been lost sixty-five years before. She had taken over 450 men with her, and now another tragedy was happening, similar in some respects, dissimilar in others. The same heroic fortitude, the same parade in perfect order, the same type of English gentlemen. But there was no enemy influence then ; there was now. If only there had been a visible foe instead of invisible death, somebody to fight and something to do. For strong, healthy men to stand awaiting eternity like this !

The soldiers sang on as the bows sank deeper and the stern rose higher. "The Long, Long Trail" gave place to "Tipperary," the first marching song of the tough old Expeditionary Force, and others.

Captain and seamen were all action. The wireless was crackling, boats were being lowered, the siren was calling for help.

It was noised abroad that a Chinese stoker had been buried in a fall of coal from one of

“ Like English Gentlemen ”

the bunkers. Volunteers were asked for, and the appeal answered without hesitation. They went gladly. You are safer on the deck of a sinking ship, with the stars and sea for company, than in the death-trap at the foot of the iron stairs. The men made their way down, worked till the sweat blinded them, and were rewarded. The poor fellow was partly uncovered. A little more and he would have been released.

“ Close watertight doors.” Alas ! the order could not be disobeyed. To let a man die like that—and yet the safety of all depended upon the sacrifice. Sadly and with reluctance they left him.

Some of the soldiers were told off to assist the sailors in lowering the boats. Thank God for action ! A boat was upset. There was a splash, and the craft assumed its correct position. The one was caused by a seaman diving in, the other by a dexterous jerk of a pair of brawny arms. That fellow must have had a heart of gold, for he went in a second time to rescue Paddy, the regimental dog !

Captain Flynn and Colonel John Ward were

Daring Deeds

on the bridge, encouraging every effort and setting a worthy example to all. Two holds were flooded and another leaking, but the water was got under control sufficiently for one of the doors to be opened for a moment or two. John Chinaman had not been forgotten ; some of the engineers pulled him out, and again the door shut.

Suddenly life moved on the face of the waters. There was the rhythm of screws. Two ships had responded to the 'S.O.S.' calls and were heading for the liner. "How welcome they seemed to us," writes Lance-Corporal Gilbert S. Watts, who was on the *Tyndareus*, "I cannot attempt to put into cold English. They seemed to be racing toward us, and might be compared to prize dogs racing across a village green. However, we could not give them our whole attention, there was too much of the element of immediate danger about our own situation. None of us exactly knew what was the matter, but we knew by the way the boat seemed to be getting lower and lower in the water enough to make us prepare for the worst."

“ *Like English Gentlemen* ”

When ordered to do so, but not a moment before, the men swarmed down ropes or rope-ladders into the boats, and were transferred to the rescuing vessels. It was not easy, and the passage from steamer to steamer was perilous. Colonel Ward left only after the last man of his regiment had disappeared over the side.

Are miracles only ancient and mediæval? Not a soul was lost, and the *Tyndareus* returned to Simonstown under her own steam. “The ship was saved,” said the Naval Commander-in-Chief of the station, “by the coolness and perseverance of the captain, officers, engineers, and engine-room staff.” That is a proud story officially condensed. His Majesty the King expressed his “admiration of the conduct displayed by all ranks” in the battalion, and added that “in their discipline and courage they worthily upheld the splendid tradition of the *Birkenhead*, ever cherished in the annals of the British Army.”

Bravo ‘The Die-hards’!

The record of the men of the Australian Imperial Forces who faced death on board

Daring Deeds

the troop transport *Ballarat* is equally inspiring. What has been said of their brethren of the Middlesex might well be repeated of them. Valour is its own best testimonial. The incident occurred a little over two months after the affair of the *Tyndareus*.

The liner was bound for England when she was torpedoed some thirty-five miles from the nearest land. By one of those extraordinary coincidences that always puzzle because they defy adequate analysis, one of the officers had only a few minutes before interrogated the second engineer on the possibility of the ship encountering a submarine. As they were in the danger zone, lifebelts had been donned, and this doubtless prompted the question. "Well," he had said, jocularly enough, "what time have you fixed for our torpedoing? Two o'clock?" Four bells rang out at that moment, and was followed almost immediately by a telephone message to the bridge from the look out at the gun mounted in the stern. A torpedo had been spotted. Others saw the wake of the evil weapon as it sped with unerring precision in the direction of the transport. It

“ *Like English Gentlemen* ”

tore an ugly hole and wrenched off one of the propeller blades. Very soon the ship began to settle down.

The ‘Alarm’ was sounded by the buglers, the ‘Advance’ quickly followed, and the men fell in at their allotted boat stations. They had practised the drill many times during the voyage, and had gradually reduced the time taken in the operation to four minutes. This was when there had been a make-believe attack. When it took place in deadly earnest the soldiers broke their own record.

“We’re all right, lads,” Colonel R. M. M’Veagh shouted from the bridge. “I was in the water myself this time two years ago. Keep steady.” This in reference to his experience in Gallipoli, when he was on the *Southland*, which was also torpedoed. “It’s all right, sir,” came the answer. “We’re all right.” There was no necessity to bid the men be of good cheer. They were that already. They smoked and joked, sang and laughed as though nothing untoward had happened. One humorist put the ship up for auction. The sale started with an offer of threepence and

Daring Deeds

ended with a bid for 2s. 9d. There was utter disregard of death. If they went under they would do so with a smile on their lips, and that is not a bad way to meet God, though it may be unorthodox. As Dr Talmage once asked, "Who wants a religion woven out of the shadows of the night?" The 1400 Australians certainly did not, if one may judge by their demeanour in the most trying of trying circumstances.

Commander G. W. Cockman, D.S.C., Royal Naval Reserve (ret.), was in command of the vessel. When the *Ballarat* began to settle down, and it looked as though all thought of saving her was futile, he gave the order to abandon the ship. Boats were lowered, and the men got into them with as much composure as if they were setting out on an excursion. They were unable to take their personal belongings, but the regimental pets were not left behind. One of them, an African squirrel, fell into the sea, and was promptly rescued. Pets always seem to do awkward things like that when there is trouble. Room was found for parrots and dogs. The men sang "Australia

“*Like English Gentlemen*”

will be there,” “The Long, Long Trail,” and “So long, Letty,” with an enthusiasm that atoned for any lack of harmony.

They had not all disembarked when the order was given for those who had left the transport to be recalled. The Australians swarmed up the side, rather curious as to the reason, but deciding in their own minds that there was evidently a possibility of the liner being saved. Although the remaining propeller was damaged, there was hope that it would be powerful enough to take the vessel to safety. Unfortunately it was nothing more than a hope, for almost as soon as the men were on deck it was reported that the water was making more headway than the pumps and the screw.

Three destroyers and two trawlers were now standing by, and in a little over two hours from the time the *Ballarat* had been torpedoed her living freight had been transferred to them. “We knew the Navy would not fail us,” a stalwart Australian remarked when the patrol vessels were approaching.

There were no casualties. The good ship

Daring Deeds

made a fine fight for life. She remained afloat for fourteen and a half hours before she gave up the struggle.

It was an Anzac Day that will be specially remembered by the 2nd and 4th Australian Brigades. And Britons everywhere may well applaud Colonel M'Veagh's words, "I am thundering proud of you," and echo those of the King, "They emulated at sea the noble deeds of their brothers on land."

CHAPTER VIII

Hide-and-Seek with Submarines

"There has been nothing finer in the history of the war, crowded though it is with deeds of heroism on the part of the Army and Navy, than the way in which the officers and men of the Merchant Service have carried on their duties, and this they will continue to do in spite of Germany's latest threat of unrestricted savagery."—DR MACNAMARA.

HANG me if I ever thought them things'd be anythin' more'n toys." The speaker spat over the side of the mine-sweeper, presumably by way of emphasis. "Now they're th' curse o' every honest seafarin' man's life—them an' mines. As for th' Kaiser's fleet, it's worse'n useless. W'enever it comes out it wishes it were in, an' w'enever it's in it wishes it were out, at least accordin' to my readin'. Tirpitz backed a good starter w'en 'e put 'is money on th' submarine, but I reckon it'll turn out an 'also ran' afore th' war's finished."

In sporting terms the skipper summed up popular ideas concerning the development of

Daring Deeds

underwater craft. The files of the *Times* just previous to the breaking out of the Great War bear eloquent testimony to the fact that some of our most eminent naval authorities, in particular Admiral Sir Percy Scott, were fully alive to the possibilities of a type of ship which has proved an undeniable asset to Germany. It is strictly in accord with the predatory instinct of the German to suggest that the correspondence on the subject was read with practical intent by the bespectacled officials of the Naval Staff in Berlin and acted upon, not pigeon-holed.

Germany put her faith in the submarine. "We deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" if we minimize her depredations at sea by means of this destructive weapon. Hundreds of thousands of tons of valuable cargo and shipping have been sent to the bottom since the moment she was 'all out to win.' That moment we may put down as the 2nd February, 1915, when the submarine blockade of Great Britain was proclaimed, the excuse being that "Since the shutting off of food supplies has come to a point when

Hide-and-Seek with Submarines

Germany no longer has sufficient food for her people, it has become necessary to bring England to terms by the exercise of force." The then Imperial Chancellor afterward contradicted himself by saying that there was no danger of starvation.

Retaliation, even if we wished it, was denied us. The German Mercantile Marine was driven from the seas at the beginning of hostilities. It scurried back to home ports in response to wireless messages, was taken prize, interned in neutral ports, or locked up in its own waterways.¹ It offers no target, as do British ships in their coming and going round the wide world. In the opening phase of the war British vessels had not so much as a 3-pdr. mounted in the stern for defence. Even then, unarmed and unaided, some of them managed to slip away from the submerged enemy. Occasionally a mammoth patch of oil and air bubbles showed that the intended victim had

¹ According to Viscount Jellicoe, when war began there were 915 German merchant ships abroad, of which 158 were able to return to their ports. When the Franco-German War broke out practically all the German vessels then abroad sought neutral harbours, where they stayed until the declaration of peace.

Daring Deeds

succeeded in its daring attempt to ram the hunter.

Captain William Henry Propert, of the *Laertes*, a steel screw steamer of 4541 tons gross, belonging to the Blue Funnel Line, saved his vessel by skilful seamanship. He was bringing a valuable cargo of spices, tobacco, and other products of the East Indies from Java to Liverpool, when he was attacked by an enemy submersible in the North Sea, between the Maas Lighthouse and the Schonwen Bank. Summoned to stop, Captain Propert put on full steam.

The master pursued a zigzag course toward the Dutch coast, the submarine travelling on the surface in hot pursuit. Every now and again the enemy treated the *Laertes* to a peppering from her machine-guns, but the only material damage was sustained by the deck gear, ventilators, compass, and funnel. When the submarine gained sufficiently on her prey she launched a torpedo, which was skilfully dodged. It passed under the stern to starboard, as Captain Propert intended it should do.

Hide-and-Seek with Submarines

No second attempt was made to destroy the ship by this means ; indeed, soon afterward those on the look-out reported that the foe was no longer gaining on them and appeared to be in difficulties. The *Laertes* did not wait to sympathize with the invalid, and on the following afternoon appeared at Ymuiden. The submarine was believed to be the U2, one of the oldest and smallest of the type in the German service.

Captain Propert, who hails from good old Devon, was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and granted a commission as temporary lieutenant in the Royal Naval Reserve. As an expression of their high appreciation of the gallant behaviour of the officers and men of the *Laertes*, the former were presented by the Admiralty with gold watches, and each member of the crew with £3. "This exceptional recognition" was intended "to mark the example" set by this gallant representative of the Merchant Service.

The case of the *Anglo-Californian*, a vessel of 7333 tons, is unlikely to be forgotten. Not only did she elude the pirate, but those who

Daring Deeds

saved the ship did so at terrible cost of life and limb. Two men are particularly conspicuous. They were father and son. The crew numbered thirty; the roll of honour included ten dead—among them the captain—and seven wounded; more than half the ship's complement.

The liner was off the south coast of Ireland, homeward bound, when a submarine appeared and gave chase. The captain's sole weapon was his wireless. Probably the enemy picked up the 'S.O.S.' call for assistance, for he opened fire on the apparatus so as to preclude the possibility of further messages being sent. Then the submarine quietly manœuvred round the steamer, as a wild animal might do before making a final spring. Having satisfied himself that he had chosen the best position, the commander began shelling the steamer, and continued to do so for four hours. Captain Archibald Parslow remained absolutely imperturbable until he fell mortally wounded.

The shell that killed him hurled his son to the deck. Nothing daunted, the younger man, who was second mate, seized the wheel and



The "Anglo-Californian" Action against a Submarine
Chas. Pears



Hide-and-Seek with Submarines

steered the ship, lying on his stomach. What remained of the woodwork afforded him some protection, however slight. Shell after shell came in quick succession, one bursting so close to Parslow that it shattered a spoke of the wheel. He continued at his work single-handed and alone until assistance arrived. The submarine came so close that the pirates used rifles.

Before his death the captain had ordered the boats to be launched. Some of the crew got into four of them and were picked up. The remainder stuck to the ship and took her into Queenstown after the enemy had given up hope of sending her to the bottom.

Captain John Richard Green, of the s.s. *Vosges*, 1295 tons register, was more fortunate, though his experience was terrible enough. He was carrying a general cargo from Bordeaux to Liverpool, and was about 60 miles west of Trevose Head, on the Cornish coast, when a German submarine signalled: "Prepare to abandon ship." Green was prepared to do nothing of the kind. He knew the capacity of his engines, and had far too great faith in

Daring Deeds

them and his staff meekly to surrender. Five passengers descended to the torrid depths of the stokehold to help the black squad, the most unenvied of a ship's company and the most hard-worked. For two hours the captain played hide-and-seek with the submarine. Never once did he offer a decent broadside-on target. He kept the enemy dead astern all the while, although the pursuing craft repeatedly tried to outwit him, and on one occasion came as close as 200 yards. Ten rounds of shrapnel were fired at the bridge, but the result was eminently unsatisfactory from the point of view of the attack. Not a single officer had to leave his post by reason of the onslaught. The captain, the chief mate, the second mate, the mess-room boy, a stoker, and a lady passenger were slightly wounded. Mr Harry Davies, the chief engineer, was killed while encouraging his men. The boats were riddled, the funnel resembled a colander, the bridge house was smashed, the engine-room pierced, and a shell did irreparable damage in the bows. The ensign was torn to shreds. As Captain Green had neither surrendered nor had any intention

Hide-and-Seek with Submarines

of doing so, he promptly hauled up another flag.

Eventually the submarine sheered off. The *Vosges* was crippled and making water badly. Captain Green now pinned his faith to the pumps, hoping they would enable the ship to remain afloat until she reached Milford. It would have been a fine ending to a fine story, but the water gradually gained, and he was forced to give up the attempt. "We have one satisfaction," he admitted, "and that is that the Germans did not see us sink." All hands were taken off by H.M.S. *Wintonia*, a patrol yacht, which landed the survivors at Newquay.

For his gallant and resolute conduct Captain Green received a similar recognition to that of the commander of the *Laertes*, and his officers and men respectively were awarded gold watches and money. The watch which in happier circumstances would have been given to poor Harry Davies is now treasured by his widow.

Captain Green's subsequent remark that if his ship had mounted a gun "there would now

Daring Deeds

be one enemy submarine less" might well have been paraphrased by Captain H. J. Gibson, of the steam tug *Homer*, that if his little vessel had been a few feet longer another tin fish would have gone to the bottom in double quick time. His vessel was making her way up Channel with the French barque *Général de Louis* in tow, when he received from an undersea pirate similar instructions to those the captain of the *Vosges* had seen fit to disobey. So that there might be no misunderstanding, the commander hailed the vessel and signalled by flag at the same time. The master of the *Homer* just held on to his course and the vessel he had in charge. The submarine then went round to the other side of the tug, repeated the order, and sent a shot over the bridge. Captain Gibson continued as before, as blind to signals as Nelson at Copenhagen, and equally far-seeing. When the enemy was abeam he changed his tactics. The hawser was cast off. Relieved of her heavy load, the *Homer* forged ahead like a locomotive which had slipped half her coaches. He made straight for the submarine, but

Hide-and-Seek with Submarines

owing to the heavy sea, missed her stern by a matter of a few feet. It was a narrow squeak for the enemy, which had already trained her machine-gun on the bridge. With great good fortune the bullets merely broke the windows of the wheelhouse and splintered the woodwork.

It was now the U-boat's turn to show her prowess. She got out of the immediate proximity of the *Homer*, obviously rather a dangerous spot, took up what she thought to be a favourable position, and fired a torpedo. It missed, although it passed very close. Then she started in chase. At the end of about thirty minutes the commander gave up the task in despair. Tugs are not worth bothering about when one fails to bag them. The *Homer* made for Bembridge, Isle of Wight, and the barque, which was laden with grain, arrived at Dungeness under sail. Captain Gibson has two interesting mementos of his skill—a testimonial on vellum and a gold watch, both from the Admiralty.

A diabolical scheme to lure a passenger steamer to her doom was delightfully circum-

Daring Deeds

vented by the captain of the *Great Southern*, which was crossing from Rosslare to Fishguard, the scene of the abortive invasion by Hoche's Black Legion in 1797. When she was some distance out a strange steamer was noticed several miles to starboard. The captain was not at all sure of the *bona fides* of the vessel, which looked remarkably as though she was endeavouring to head off the *Great Southern* from her course. As the passenger steamer was evidently not to be tricked in this way, the stranger hoisted signals of distress, and the conning tower of a submarine flying the German ensign appeared. No sooner was the monster sighted than the *Great Southern* was swung round so as to present her stern to the enemy, who gave up the chase. The vessel which a few minutes before had required assistance made off with a speed that would have done justice to her trial trip.

Perhaps the most amazing escape of all was that of a Liverpool steamer of 3500 tons known as the *Delmira*. A cat is popularly supposed to have nine lives, a vessel only one. How

Hide-and-Seek with Submarines

many the ship in question has must be left for the reader to puzzle out for himself. The first chapter of the story coincides with what unfortunately has been too common to many vessels : a U-boat, the firing of shots, and the getting of the crew into boats after a bold attempt to elude the enemy. A bomb was then placed on board by the pirates and the ship set on fire. Next followed a torpedo, which was so effective that it tore a gaping wound in the side and damaged the machinery. The commander of the submarine, evidently more charitably disposed toward the shipwrecked men than he had been to their ship, took their boats in tow in the direction of the coast, leaving them when a steamer was seen approaching.

Now a derelict in the Channel is not a suitable companion for a living ship. She is a corpse awaiting burial. As it happened, a British destroyer passed the *Delmira* soon after she had been abandoned. After making sure that there was no living person on board, the commander sought to give the burning vessel her death-blow by several well-placed

Daring Deeds

shots, and then went on his way. He had done his duty in endeavouring to remove a dangerous obstacle from the path of seafaring men like himself, and was thereby entitled to their gratitude.

Shell, bombs, torpedo, and flame failed. She drifted on with the tide for hours, and eventually grounded off the French coast. Willing hands went to the rescue of the ship which had defied the Huns, got the fire under control, and took her in tow to Cherbourg. There the *Delmira* was placed in dry dock, where it was found that in taking the ground she had sustained additional damage, this time to her bottom plates. However, the steamer was patched up, and in due course was convoyed to Sunderland to be thoroughly overhauled. Has any vessel more richly deserved an unsolicited testimonial to her seaworthy qualities?

The following incident concerns a double escape, although at one period it looked very much as if it would end in a double tragedy. Two members of the Royal Naval Division, which played such a gallant part in the defence

Hide-and-Seek with Submarines

of Antwerp, were subsequently interned in a concentration camp in Holland. After remaining there a few months the two volunteers succeeded in eluding the vigilance of the guard. They made their way to a certain port, concealed themselves on an outward-bound vessel, made themselves as comfortable as was possible for a couple of stowaways with strictly limited accommodation—and sighted an enemy submarine during the crossing. It looked very much as though they would have been better advised had they stayed in Holland. To have stood up against the Skoda guns that had battered their way to the great Belgian seaport, tramped long and weary miles during the evacuation to find themselves in Holland, run terrible risks of discovery in order to get to sea and be drowned! Could Irony go further?

The captain of the ship, however, was not caught napping, and when some of the Germans appeared on the conning tower of their craft a hail of bullets from the pistols of the two stowaways sent them below in double quick time. The submarine then submerged, and was no more seen.

Daring Deeds

One weather-beaten old skipper hailing from Grimsby put in an appearance at that port when he was least expected. He had encountered pretty well everything there was to encounter and decided to take a few hours off. "The North Sea is a bit of a mix up," he explained. "On our port side was a mine-field, on our starboard quarter was a U-boat, and hovering over us was a Zeppelin, so I thought the best thing was to make tracks for Grimsby."

CHAPTER IX

Sea Rovers and Prison Ships

"Above all nations is humanity."—GOETHE

I HAVE the honour to report that I have arrived in Hampton Roads with the prize ship *Appam*, a British liner." So ran the message addressed to Count Bernstorff, once German Ambassador at Washington, and a much-respected member of the Diplomatic Service until he was found out. It is both curt and courteous, and none can reasonably complain of either quality ; it is likewise couched in the orthodox terms expected in a communication from one official to another. Yet the studied severity of the language accentuates rather than hides the suggestion of triumph. When the intelligence was communicated to the Press it made harsh reading for Britons, who are apt to attribute omniscience to their Navy. They expect it to be here, there, everywhere, and elsewhere at the same time. The average Englishman

Daring Deeds

does not make a hobby of geography, and he sometimes grumbles first, thinks afterward, and looks up facts at a more convenient season, namely, never. He forgets, or does not know, that there are about 142,000,000 square miles of sea, covering five-sevenths of the earth's surface. The combined navies of the world would be insufficient to patrol an area so vast. That of the North Sea alone, which looks puny enough on a map of the two hemispheres, is 140,000 nautical miles.

The moral of these statistics, and even unpicturesque-looking figures point a moral and adorn a tale, is not far to seek. It is marvellous that so few German raiders made their appearance, particularly as the converted merchantman was regarded by Germany as a unit of considerable consequence for the purpose of commerce destroying. The idea at the back of Germany's policy was this: Each ship that went down deprived the enemy of something he wanted, and the fewer British ships that remained for after-the-war purposes the better for the future development of Hun maritime traffic.

Sea Rovers and Prison Ships

Taking them all round, commanders of corsairs behaved themselves as sportsmen. There was plenty of rough-and-ready chivalry on their part. At the same time their presence on the seven seas was a constant source of anxiety to those who sailed beneath the Red Ensign. The rovers turned up in the most unlikely places, and in the queerest of disguises. Shabby tramps suddenly became men-of-war, and all manner of tricks were called into play.

We have seen how the *Möwe* went about her nefarious business, and brief mention has been made of the capture of the *Appam*.¹ Unlike many of the vessels which this corsair captured, this fine Elder Dempster liner was not sent to the bottom. She made a dramatic entrance into Newport News, Virginia, when she had been given up as a total loss in England. The *Appam* was one of fifteen vessels which came within range of the rover's guns. The Germans fondly hoped that by sending her as a prize to a neutral port—the United States was then a neutral—their claim would hold good

¹ See *ante*, p. 38.

Daring Deeds

under an old treaty, and she would be allowed to remain there. They found very soon that they had been hugging a delusion. In response to the enemy commander's protest that the passengers were on German territory, he was politely informed that they were in American waters, and entitled to receive American hospitality. All the other captures of the *Möwe*, aggregating 50,000 tons, were sunk. Among those on board the *Appam* were Sir Edward Merewether, Governor of Sierra Leone, his wife, and the Administrator of Lagos.

The liner was taken off the North-East coast of Madeira by a very artful ruse. At the stern the *Möwe* displayed the ensign of the German Imperial Navy, weighted so that it could not flutter, and from the forepeak a Red Ensign was displayed, which signified that she was not under control.

Captain Harrison approached to within 200 yards of the apparently disabled tramp, a nondescript vessel painted red and black, with a single funnel, stopped his engines, and was about to inquire what assistance he could

Sea Rovers and Prison Ships

render, when he was confronted by an imposing array of weapons which, up to that time, had been concealed. Although the *Appam* had a gun of small calibre mounted in the stern, the captain surmised that if he so much as trained it on his opponent he would stand an excellent chance of being annihilated. The shell which hurtled through the air and across the bridge was quite sufficient to show the hopelessness of any plan of offence, especially as there were passengers on board, including seventeen women and a negro baby. His human freight is a captain's first care. Count von Dohna-Schlodien fully confirmed the captain's surmise when the two stood face to face a little later. "Had you used your wireless or touched your gun," he said, "I should have given you a broadside."

A lieutenant and a prize crew of twenty-one sailors put off in two boats from the *Möwe*, and were speedily on board. There happened to be a number of prisoners from the Cameroons on the *Appam*, who were being taken to England for internment. These were given their freedom without further

Daring Deeds

ado, presented with revolvers and rifles, and told to mount guard over their former keepers. The tables were turned with a vengeance. Gaolers became bondmen. Crew and passengers were locked in cabins. The bridge, wireless, and specie-room were taken over by the enemy. No British officers were allowed to remain; after the Germans had concluded their investigation, which was characteristically thorough, they were transferred to the *Möwe*. Later on the commander changed his mind as to their accommodation, and they were returned to their own vessel. There was no lack of company. Many other prisoners who had fallen into the Count's net previous to the capture of the *Appam* were transhipped to his latest prize.

There was not the remotest chance of the prisoners overpowering the crew, for, apart from the fact that the guard was armed, the British officers were warned that any attempt to rush the ship would result in its being blown to pieces. Some of the passengers tell stories of bombs placed in different parts of the liner connected by electric wires with a main switch,

Sea Rovers and Prison Ships

after the fashion of the fire control station of a battleship. It was like living on the edge of a volcano, only there was considerably more risk of an eruption. As a German was in charge of the Marconi apparatus, he picked up all messages from British cruisers and reported them to the officer in charge, who took good care to keep out of the way of the grey hunters.

When the Count decided to send his prize into an American port in charge of Hans Berg, the lieutenant showed no undue haste to carry out his orders. There was more than a touch of bravado in that gentleman's mental make-up. It was owing to Chief Engineer Ashburner that the *Appam* was compelled to put in at Newport News. He and his fellow-prisoners were by no means enamoured of the situation, and so Mr Ashburner played a very clever trick on the gentleman on the bridge while they were crossing the Atlantic. It was certainly not devoid of humour. Food was scarce, but fuel was plentiful. While coal and oil lasted, Berg was determined to remain at sea and keep his people on short rations.

Daring Deeds

A kippered herring and a piece of bread, biscuits and cheese, curry and rice constituted the daily menu. In the engine-room Ashburner was equally determined that the commander should not have his own way in everything. Gallons of excellent lubricating oil found their way in some mysterious manner to the bilge, and tons of good steam coal were shot into the ash-ejector. No *Möwe* was standing guard ready to haul up colliers for the purpose of replenishing depleted bunkers. There was nothing for it but to run into Newport News. Mr Ashburner had got his own back. The passengers of the *Appam* were released.

When the *Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse*, a steel twin-screw steamer with a gross tonnage of 14,349, left the Vulcan Yard, Stettin, in 1897, she was the largest vessel ever launched, with the exception of the *Great Eastern*. For some time this North German Lloyd liner held the Atlantic record for speed, and also enjoyed an enviable reputation as a 'good sea boat.' If she did her best to injure British maritime passenger traffic in days of peace,

Sea Rovers and Prison Ships

she certainly did her utmost on her last great and desperate adventure.

How she escaped from Bremerhaven to prey on the trade routes to the Cape and South America is not difficult to explain, if we accept the statement of one of her crew who was taken prisoner. In a letter to an acquaintance, he stated that the *Kaiser Wilhelm* was commissioned as an auxiliary cruiser on the 2nd August, 1914, left the Weser on the 4th, and during the afternoon of the latter day received orders at sea to molest British commerce on the Atlantic. She proceeded via Iceland and Greenland, and then turned south to the Azores and the Canary Islands. The liner was painted as black as a tarred fence by way of disguise, and mounted ten serviceable 4.1-in. guns.

The officers and men went about their work in a manner which won a good word for them from the British Admiralty when she was destroyed after a short, sharp, and furious career. "They appear," ran the message, "to have carried out their duties with humanity and restraint, and are therefore worthy of all

Daring Deeds

seamanlike consideration.” That is a very fine testimonial. Their behaviour when they pulled up the Union Castle liner *Galician* is an illustration. This vessel had left Cape Town for Teneriffe and England on the 29th July, when all the world was discussing the possibility of a vast European conflict. Few people thought that England was likely to be involved. It was not until the 8th of the following month that the passengers of the *Galician* heard that Great Britain had declared war on Germany. The news was received by wireless, but there seemed little likelihood of the ship being involved on the voyage, although the funnel was disguised, deck lights and portholes obscured, and other measures taken by way of precaution. There was the Navy, and everybody had confidence in that.

The passengers were discussing the situation, and guessing the name of a four-funnelled liner which had appeared on the horizon, when the *Galician* began to slow down. Those navigating the ship alone knew the reason. They had been given the alternative to stop or be sunk by the rapidly-approaching stranger.

Sea Rovers and Prison Ships

The 'S.O.S.' signal was at once sent out, indeed, the operator was in the middle of spelling the name of the liner when the other vessel signalled, "Attempt to send any communication, and we sink you. Dismantle wireless." There is no reason to ask why this order was complied with. The stranger had guns trained on the helpless *Galician*, and her name could be read on the bows. That name was *Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse*.

A boat was launched from the auxiliary cruiser and duly made fast to the British steamer. An officer and men came aboard, dismantled the wireless, took the ship's papers and other documents, made an inventory of the cargo, ordered the captain to muster crew and passengers, and arrested Lieutenant Deane, of the East Lancashire Regiment, and a private of the Royal Garrison Artillery. When the Germans left the ship they took the soldiers with them as prisoners of war.

The commander of the cruiser then held a council of war. On the *Galician* men and women knew that their lives and those of their children hung in the balance. So *this* was

Daring Deeds

war ! Their previous experience of the dread thing had been merely an affair of newspapers, political talk, cheering C.I.V.s as they marched through the City on their way to fight the Boers, 'black days' when affairs went wrong, 'mafficking' when affairs went well. What was the British Navy doing ?

After a deal of talk the Germans came to a decision. The *Galician* was not to be sunk at present, though her boats were to be provisioned and kept in readiness. She was to proceed as directed, the *Kaiser Wilhelm* as her escort. What baser indignity could be suffered by British sea-dogs ? The course set was toward the coast of West Africa.

Heaviness endured throughout the succeeding night. Few slept. Joy came in the morning. Everybody cheered. To the amazement and relief of all, this message was sent across the heaving waters from the great black liner :

"To Captain Day, s.s. *Galician*. We will not destroy your vessel owing to the women and children on board. You are released. Good-bye. Captain."

Sea Rovers and Prison Ships

Back went the answer :

“ Grateful thanks of passengers and crew. Good-bye. Captain.”

War did not seem so ghastly after all. But that was in the early days of the conflict.¹ The *Arlanza*, a 15,044-ton liner of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company's extensive fleet, was even more fortunate than the *Galician*. She was hailed by the *Kaiser Wilhelm* off Cape Blanco, West Africa, and allowed to proceed after taking down her wireless. The crew of the s.s. *Kaipara* (7392 tons), however, were transferred to the auxiliary cruiser, and after over fifty shots had been fired at her she sank. The German commander regretted the necessity, and possibly by way of apology for bad shooting, informed the captain of the *Kaipara* that Sir John Jellicoe's flagship had been torpedoed and four other British battle-ships sent below. The poor little trawler, *Tubal Cain*, captured off the north of Iceland,

¹ The *Galician*, afterward fitted up as a hospital ship and renamed the *Glenart Castle*, was torpedoed in the Bristol Channel on the 26th February, 1918. She was outward bound, consequently no patients were on board. The master at the time of the submarine attack was Captain Burt.

Daring Deeds

and the Elder Dempster liner *Nyanga* were also destroyed. All the prisoners, together with a number of officers and men of the *Kaiser Wilhelm*, were subsequently taken to her two colliers, the *Bethania* and the *Arucas*. They were told that a British cruiser was about to open fire. The Germans put up a fight, though a hopeless one.

"Only about fifty men were left on the *Kaiser* to man the guns," writes a German who was on board. "We prepared to sink our ship, so that it might not fall into the hands of the enemy. I was the last man to leave the vessel, after having opened the bottom valves in order to sink it.¹ I escaped through a porthole—there was not time to reach the decks. Fortunately, I caught the *Bethania*, which was steaming away to get out of danger, but I had to swim hard to do it.

"As the *Highflyer* gave all her attention to

¹ This was not the result of the sea-cocks being opened, but of the accuracy of the *Highflyer's* fire. Great holes were made under the water-line and elsewhere. Captain Rudolph Meyer, navigating officer of the *Kaiser Wilhelm*, admitted that if all British men-of-war shot as straight as the light cruiser he would be "sorry for our poor fellows in the North Sea."

Sea Rovers and Prison Ships

the short combat which followed, we escaped westward and made up our mind to reach America if possible—as neutral land. All went well until we were about 300 miles off the Charleston coast, when accidentally we met the English cruiser *Essex*, which made us prisoners and brought us to Kingston, Jamaica, September 10. We were treated here according to our rank, I must say more generously than I expected.”

The *Highflyer*, a light cruiser of 5600 tons, mounting eleven 6-in. guns, eight 12-pdr., and one 3-pdr., was a training ship for cadets. Among those on board were forty public-school boys who had joined her as midshipmen eleven months before.

The *Kronprinz Wilhelm*, one of the fastest German steamers on the Atlantic service, and belonging to the same line as the *Kaiser Wilhelm*, left New York hurriedly one night in the early days of August 1914. Instead of appearing in her usual colour, her superstructure had been painted grey, and it was whispered that, once beyond the three-mile limit, her hull would take on the same hue.

Daring Deeds

Her destination, it was reported, was Bremerhaven, but thoughtful Americans shook their heads and reserved judgment. German cruisers had recently left the West Indies, and even the best-behaved warship cannot get on without fuel. It was rumoured that the smart Transatlantic liner of 15,000 tons had suffered gross indignity for the cause of the Fatherland; that her transformation extended deeper than her change of hue; that she was, in fact, nothing more than a collier. She had certainly taken on board many thousands of tons of hard coal before she slipped out.

The secret was not kept for any length of time. While busy discharging black diamonds to the German cruiser *Karlsruhe*, the two ships were sighted by H.M.S. *Suffolk*, but owing to superior speed the enemy drew away. The auxiliary was later engaged by another cruiser. Again fortune favoured her. Thanks to gathering darkness and a heavy sea, she slipped off after receiving an ugly wound in her port bow. The British vessel was not so much as scratched. How the *Kronprinz Wilhelm* came by her 6-in. guns is a mystery.

Sea Rovers and Prison Ships

She probably obtained them from the *Karlsruhe*, though her captain spun a yarn that they originally belonged to the Houlder liner *La Correntina*, a ship of 8529 tons, which she had rounded up during her wanderings in the South Atlantic. After the passengers and crew had been taken off, and a considerable amount of loot in the way of good frozen meat and coal, she was sent to the bottom. This was a very valuable prize, for the vessel and cargo represented over £250,000 sterling. Her people were subsequently transferred to the German steamer *Sierra Cordoba*, and taken to Monte Video. The *Highland Brae* was also secured and scuttled.

Another vessel which fell into the clutches of Captain Thierfelder was the French steamer *Guadeloupe*, of 6600 tons. She captured the British steamer *Chasehill*, but when a certain amount of coal and provisions had been lifted, and the refrigerating machinery rendered useless, some of the *Kronprinz Wilhelm's* prisoners were put on board, and she was released. She also filled her bunkers from the big French barque *Union*, which was

Daring Deeds

destroyed, as was the s.s. *Indian Prince*, a ship under American charter. Justification was sought for sinking the Norwegian *Lemantha*, by arguing that as she was carrying wheat, and grain was treated by Germany as contraband, there was nothing else to do. It is strange logic.

Eventually the *Kronprinz Wilhelm* had run her course, though she was at large over eight months. She stumbled into Newport News, that harbour of lost causes, looking very disreputable, worn, and aged. Her sides were rusted, the funnels white for lack of paint, the great plates dented. The once stately liner appeared as though she had suffered a paralytic stroke. There was a marked list to port, the result of the cruiser's attention. Altogether she was in an appalling state, for there was sickness aboard and little else. The bunkers and larders were almost exhausted. Disease and want had achieved what the British Navy had failed to do, not because the patrol was asleep, but because the oceans are so vast. The *Kronprinz Wilhelm* was credited with having sunk no fewer than thirteen ships.

Sea Rovers and Prison Ships

‘Our work is not yet finished,’ Captain Thierfelder declared in a burst of optimism. He talked plentifully about making a dash to sea when necessary repairs had been carried out. There his hopes began and ended. The *Kronprinz Wilhelm* was interned.

After a piratical career of seven months the *Prinz Eitel Friedrich*, another North German Lloyd liner, gave herself up at the same port. During that time she disposed of 24,365 tons of shipping. From the point of view of armament she was the heaviest gunned of the various German auxiliary cruisers. It is believed that the vessel carried four 8-in. guns and six 4-in. guns. This ship left Tsingtau in the first month of the war, crossed the Pacific, and eventually reached the Atlantic, where she joined Von Spee’s squadron. During the battle off the Falkland Islands she managed to escape, continuing her work of destruction until necessity and the presence of British naval forces compelled her to give up. It will be recollected that this auxiliary cruiser sunk the American ship *William P. Frye*, about which

Daring Deeds

there was so much discussion in the spring of 1915.

It was a thousand pities that a plucky attempt by Captain Wedgewood, of the s.s. *Willerby*, to ram the *Prinz Eitel Friedrich* miscarried. The two vessels were quite close when the raider signalled the British steamer to stop. As the order was not carried out, the cruiser swerved astern to avoid a possible collision. Captain Wedgewood also went astern, hoping to run down his enemy. He all but succeeded, and missed by a few yards only.

The officers and men of one of the numerous ships sunk by the liner were actually marooned on Easter Island, in the Pacific, and considerably over 2000 miles from the coast of Chile. Captain Thierichsen's hero must have been the late Captain Kidd. The ship in question, the s.s. *Kildalton*, was some ninety miles west of Valparaiso when captured. Ten minutes were given the crew to clear out, after which the *Prinz Eitel Friedrich* used the steamer as a target. A dozen shots missed, two struck. As she went down she carried with her a

Sea Rovers and Prison Ships

valuable cargo consigned to a German firm at Callao !

When the island of mammoth statues and stone houses was reached, the crew of the *Kildalton* and the French barque *Jean* were put ashore and left to fend for themselves. After some 3000 tons of coal had been taken from the latter vessel, she was sunk by a bomb. A solitary white man happened to live on the island. Out of the fullness of his heart he offered the stranded mariners what hospitality he could. Later on some of them were rescued by the Norwegian steamer *Nordic* ; a few elected to remain as neighbours of Mr P. H. Edmunds.

Probably the most romantic adventure of all in connexion with enemy raiders was that of the s.s. *Southport*, of Cardiff, commanded by Captain Aristide B. Clopet. It illustrates the determination, pluck, and resource of a little band of merchant seamen when confronted by a whole series of catastrophes that might well have made them give way to abject despair.

The ship, of 3588 tons, put in at Kusaie,

Daring Deeds

the most easterly of the German Caroline group of islands, in September 1914. Everybody on board was in complete ignorance that there was 'a war on' until S.M.S. *Geier*, a small unprotected corvette of 1604 tons mounting eight 4.1-in. guns, arrived in the harbour. She was accompanied by a transport. An armed boarding-party enlightened the crew in no uncertain manner. When one of the German officers asked for the ship's papers to be handed over to him, Captain Clopet politely but firmly declined. He had no official information on the subject, and was not disposed to accept mere hearsay evidence. Moreover, as he explained, his ship had been chartered to take phosphates to Stettin, which he had every reason to believe was somewhere in the dear Fatherland.

All the captain's persuasive arguments proved unavailing. He was compelled by sheer force of circumstances, very tangibly represented by guns on the corvette, to surrender. Down came the Union Jack, and up went the German flag. If muttered anathemas could have killed, the man who

Sea Rovers and Prison Ships

carried out the substitution would have dropped dead on the deck. The Germans tried a new dodge with the *Southport*. They sent a little party of engineers from the *Geier*, who had little difficulty in rendering the vessel useless by removing certain parts of her engines. Then the transport came along, and helped herself liberally from the steamer's bunkers and oil tanks.

The commander of the man-of-war next informed the captain that as he had important business elsewhere that would occupy him for a season, he would hold Captain Clopet personally responsible for the ship, whose destiny would be decided by a Prize Court. This was nothing more nor less than adding insult to injury, particularly as he unduly emphasized the fact that the *Southport* was now German property. The commander expressed his regret that scarcity of stores precluded him from leaving a supply of provisions for the officers and crew, and was kind enough to add that "The people of Paris once lived on rats." He had only four loaves to spare, but by way of compensation he made an order

Daring Deeds

on King Sigrah of Kusaie for such food as was obtainable. As a cyclone had recently visited the island this was of doubtful value. The *Geier* and the transport then proceeded on their way.

A damaged ship, little coal, less oil, nothing to eat, a scrap of German paper, and a promise to return were almost the only assets of the little band. The word 'almost' is used advisedly. Your real British sea-dog has always a stock of grit. The men of the *Southport* had plenty of it. Almost as soon as the enemy had disappeared, nimble wits and busy fingers were hard at work in the bowels of the ship. The captain consulted the chief engineer, Mr Harold W. J. Cox, as to the possibility of repairing the machinery. Instead of muttering "It can't be done," the officer surveyed the high and low-pressure engines and said he would try. He and his staff set to work, and in due course reported to the captain that by a little ingenuity they could make the vessel go ahead but not astern. This was decidedly awkward. Nevertheless, it was far better than being unable to make the *Southport*

Sea Rovers and Prison Ships

budge an inch. She could move, and that was a very great deal. The captain had no wish to stay in port as a bailiff for the Imperial German Government. He was all for recapturing the steamer, and getting her away from beautiful but inhospitable Kusaie.

The plan was full of grave risks. Being a wise man, Clopet took the officers and engineers completely into his confidence. Without their cordial co-operation he could do nothing. Was escape worth trying? The unanimous verdict was "Yes."

After securing a few hundred pounds of roots and a fair supply of coco-nuts, the steamer was warped into position for clearing the entrance. This was successfully accomplished, and in less than a fortnight the Ship That Could Only Go Forward arrived at Brisbane. Her captors had been most delightfully sold.

Later on the *Geier* herself developed engine trouble and was forced to run for Honolulu. When comfortably settled in dry dock, two Japanese cruisers and a gunboat lay in wait just outside the three-mile limit. Of course the commander of the corvette would run the

Daring Deeds

gauntlet, and equally of course he didn't. The *Geier* shared a similar fate to the auxiliary cruisers which had sought shelter at Newport News.

The courage, resolution, and skill displayed by Captain Clopet and Chief Engineer H. W. J. Cox were officially recognized by the Board of Trade. Each was presented with handsome pieces of plate ; both richly deserved them.

CHAPTER X

Perils of the Patrol

"We are apt to associate the sea with happy days, with sunny skies ; but the Navy, the Auxiliary Forces, and the Mercantile Marine have the task of pursuing their arduous duties in days and nights of strain and watchfulness, in all kinds of weather, amidst snow, rain, and blizzard. It is to the ceaseless work of the Royal Navy, the tramp steamer, the coal craft, that we owe our very existence."—SIR ERIC GEDDES.

FOUR-AND-TWENTY half-dead men, some on a couple of rafts, others on a ship's boat floating wrong side up. One or two, the strongest or the most determined, were trying to attract attention by flag-wagging with shirts tied to oars. So far their ebbing energy had been altogether wasted, though the exercise served to keep them warmer than their mates. Not much of the romance of the sea here ; rather all tragedy, and cold, and hunger, and the bitterness that enters into a man's soul at such times.

Bruises and blood were common to most of the poor fellows. They had been badly buffeted. Three and a half hours in the

Daring Deeds

water, ill-clad, exposed to the searching wind, helpless and wellnigh hopeless—and to the north a large liner pursuing her course without regard for their sufferings. In the eyes of the law ignorance excuses no man; on the ocean it excuses much. If those on the look-out on the passing vessel saw the flotsam at all, which is scarcely likely, they probably regarded rafts and boat as a cluster of seaweed. Sacrifice is one of the fundamentals of life. But for the presence of the Patrol there would have been no passing steamer, and the shipwrecked men had belonged to the great fleet whose members police the seas. They had saved others; themselves they could not save.

The next ship that came their way mistook the little group for a submarine. At a distance the floating things merged into one. No blame to the captain had he given the black mass a wide berth; ships had been lost in the Irish Sea before through inquisitiveness. He approached a little closer, without becoming too venturesome. If the object on which his glasses were focussed were a U-boat, it

Perils of the Patrol

was without a conning tower. So far as he knew a conning tower was an indispensable accessory, but the German *Reichsmarineamt* was clever. It had something more than a sneaking regard for the scrap heap, and was not afraid to try new devices. Presently the captain picked out figures, an upturned boat and rafts. Merely another tragedy of the sea, and not a new species of submarine.

It is not easy to effect a rescue in a small boat, particularly when those needing succour are almost past help. Eighteen men were lifted or helped in, and transferred to the steamer, a collier named the *Balmerino*, commanded by Captain James Foster. Before the boat returned for the others an armed merchantman had come up and taken them off.

They were survivors of the *Bayano*, a vessel of the Merchant Service engaged on patrol duty. She was 'carrying on' when a torpedo from a submarine compassed her end. It was five o'clock in the morning, when many of her 220 men were below. The nature of the explosion was such that few of them

Daring Deeds

were afforded an opportunity to get away from the stricken steamer. She lived for a few minutes only after having received the wound, and disappeared with the majority of her company. Dead bodies floating in lifebelts, and a quantity of wreckage were discovered by the s.s. *Castlereagh*, which was obliged to give up searching the spot for possible survivors owing to the appearance of a German submarine. The enemy saw to it that this humanitarian task was not accomplished by chasing the steamer for twenty minutes. War may be war, but the U-boat has made it something worse. It has denuded certain commanders of bowels of compassion.

Whereas Great Britain has done her best to retain the goodwill of neutrals, often enough at terrible cost to herself, Germany has worked to forfeit it, apparently in the hope that her policy of tyranny will "compel them to come in," that text beloved of the Inquisitors of an earlier epoch of cruelty. In a war such as this, which was started for commercial reasons and soon developed into a conflict of ethics,

Perils of the Patrol

the position of the neutral is a *pons asinorum*. There can be no such thing, and there is none. "Who is not for us is against us" is Germany's point of view; "Who is not against us is for us" is ours. We content ourselves with examining ships for articles likely to be intended for the enemy, sometimes carrying out the search at sea and sometimes in port. Doubtful cases are passed on to a Special Committee for final decision. The British Navy and its auxiliaries of the Merchant Service not only safeguard our shores, keep open the Seven Seas, carry soldiers and munitions, and largely control the coast-line of Europe, but also shepherd the commerce of those countries which have not specifically defined their attitude as For or Against.

Many and various are the types of craft employed in besieging Germany from the west. They range from mammoth Atlantic liners to drifters, tugs, steam yachts, and motor launches. Each has its own particular part to play in policing the ocean highways, and in sapping the strength of the Central Powers. So long ago as the autumn of 1915

Daring Deeds

there were no fewer than 2300 auxiliary craft. The basis of the blockade, as Rear-Admiral Sir Dudley de Chair has truly stated, "rests upon the ability and courage of reserve officers and men drawn from Great Britain's Mercantile Marine." Admirals, Vice-Admirals, and Rear-Admirals have been proud to serve with the auxiliaries.

Many drifters which once kept British breakfast tables supplied with herrings are now utilized for catching considerably bigger fry. They are after Germany's tin fish, and as many of them are constructed of good British oak, and can travel as fast as a submerged submarine, the latter stands an exceedingly poor chance of escape if the bows of the one strike any part of the other.

Traders and liners converted into auxiliary armed cruisers largely compose the restless Blockade Squadron of the North Sea. Many of these ships patrol their allotted areas for fifty days at a stretch, 'taking it green' in boisterous weather with as much nonchalance as when the wind is even less than the proverbial capful. The only thing the men 'do

Perils of the Patrol

a tap' about is the rigour of the long, cold nights. This, one must admit, is reasonable excuse for grumbling. Everlastingly sea-punching a beaten track is more deadly monotonous than a country policeman's job, though there is an element of uncertainty about it which is not so evident in the parish constable's lot. A sharp look-out has to be kept for submarines and mines, both of which have exacted numerous victims. Sometimes a patrol ship disappears as though the deep had opened and swallowed her up. Bodies and wreckage are washed ashore or picked up by a passing vessel. Nobody knows the why and the wherefore of the mystery. The *Viknor*, once a popular cruising yacht known far and wide as the *Viking*, sank without a solitary survivor to report details. Bad weather, torpedo, explosion, mine, or fire compassed her death; Neptune alone knows which. The *Bayano* was submarined, and took some 200 men to the bottom with her in four minutes. To quote the remark of a sailor serving on a former trader, now boasting a gun or two, "You never know if

Daring Deeds

the next minute will be your's or the other fellow's.'"

Rear-Admiral Sir Dudley de Chair, who commanded the Tenth Cruiser (Blockade) Squadron for over eighteen months, and for the greater part of that time flew his flag in the Allan liner *Alsatian*, has furnished an interesting description of how a patrolling cruiser enforces the blockade.¹ When a ship is sighted and overhauled, she is signalled by flags and a couple of blank charges to stand by.

"Accompanied by an armed guard of five men," he says, "the boarding-officer goes over the cruiser's side, and often at some peril to life and limb manages somehow to clamber up the tramp's deck. I have often seen the cruiser's dory stove in and the boarding-party thrown into the water.

"Our boarding-officer interviews the captain of the merchantman, who states his port of origin, his destination, his cargo, the length of his voyage, and whether or not he

¹ In an interview granted to the London correspondent of the *Brooklyn Eagle*.

Perils of the Patrol

stands in need of assistance. The crew is sometimes mustered in suspicious cases to determine whether any German subjects are aboard. Finally, the manifests are carefully examined.

“In many cases the neutral ship is quite innocent and is allowed immediately to proceed ; in fact, whenever there is fair doubt about the cargo we are lenient in releasing our temporary capture. In the case of fishing trawlers which swarm the North Sea, it is possible to examine the cargo immediately, and where ships are partly in ballast the examination may also be done quickly.”

As already noted, it is not always practicable to search a large steamer at sea, and the vessel is conducted to the nearest port for the overhauling process. Four instances came under the Admiral's personal observation of how British patrols had rescued neutral ships from destruction by the enemy. “On another occasion,” he added, “we came upon a Scandinavian with masts broken off at the deck and the crew lashed to the bulwarks, while heavy seas swept her from bow to stern.

Daring Deeds

Our men saved the crew at some risk to their own lives, stood by until the gale abated, and then towed the wreck to a British port for assistance and repair. We towed one American ship, which had been drifting about helplessly for twelve days without coal and food, into a British port through the worst sort of a sea."

A sub-lieutenant, R.N.R., placed in charge of a Norwegian sailing ship, was compelled to abandon her one ugly night owing to the near presence of an exceedingly dangerous ledge of rocks. To his amazement the crewless brigantine got through the narrow passage without sustaining the slightest damage. Her escape savoured of the uncanny. It was as though the wraith of some long-dead mariner who had met his death there had come from below and taken the wheel by way of revenge. The men went back to the vessel, and although she was virtually water-logged, managed to bring her into port. They then started to pump four feet of blue sea from her hold.

The modern blockade runner is up to all manner of tricks to conceal contraband; it

Perils of the Patrol

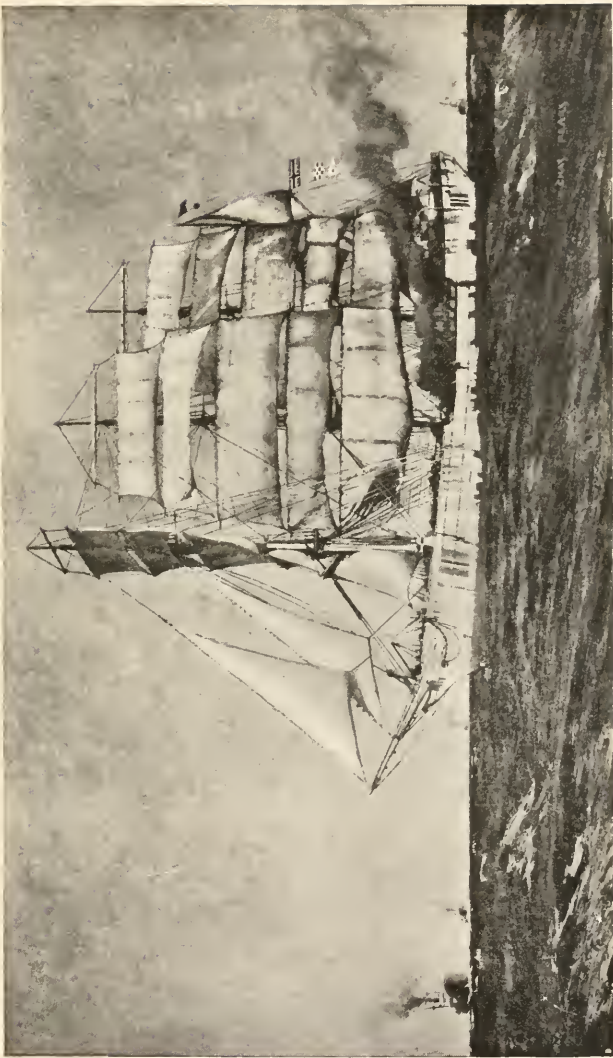
may be added that boarding-parties are usually very successful in discovering them. All kinds of things useful to the enemy have been found in innocent-looking bundles of hay, and the top layers of casks are not necessarily genuine samples of their contents. Barrels of flour, on being probed, yielded a rich haul of cotton; coffee sacks concealed rubber, and what appeared to be onions proved on closer inspection to be balls of the same valuable product skilfully painted to represent the vegetable. False bulkheads, double bottoms, hollow deck planks and masts have concealed guns and ammunition. To secure copper for the Germans, unscrupulous traders have fitted keels and plates of that metal to their craft. False manifests as to the destination of cargo are common. They do not deceive the wily birds of the Patrol.

When the conflict was young the enemy sometimes dispatched a sailing vessel flying neutral colours as a trap for British look-out ships. When an auxiliary cruiser came up to investigate, a submarine hitherto covered by the counterfeit trader had more than a

Daring Deeds

sporting chance of securing a victim. Sending out wireless messages for help, hoisting signals of distress, and issuing clouds of smoke to make believe the vessel was on fire were other dodges used in the propaganda of *Kultur*.

The smaller ships of the Patrol are usually associated with home waters, but many a former favourite of the passenger service is doing good work far from its port of registry. The *Tara*, in pre-war days a member of the London and North-Western Railway's fleet running between Holyhead and Dublin, and known as the *Hibernia*, was on active service in the Eastern Mediterranean as an armed boarding-steamer, when she was torpedoed in the Bay of Sollum. She was down and under within ten minutes, which is not surprising considering the force of the explosion. It tore a great hole in the side, killed a dozen men below, and smashed the starboard engine. Some of the crew managed to get into the boats; others were peremptorily ordered to go aboard the submarine by her commander. The enemy then towed the boats in the direction of Port Sollum, on the coast of North



German Sailing-ship used as a Raider

Chas. Pears

Smoke is issuing from her as though she were on fire, and she is using S.O.S. signals to induce vessels to come near.

Perils of the Patrol

Africa, and handed over the survivors to a Turkish guard. Some soldiers of the Crescent have quite an enviable reputation for decent behaviour toward prisoners ; these particular specimens were nothing more nor less than a set of ruffians.

For ten agonizing days the men were marched through rugged ravines and across burning desert that tore and rotted their boots, blistered their feet, and almost crippled them. Food was so scarce and the supply of drink so scanty that death would have been eagerly welcomed. They were given no respite. Almost suffocated by heat during the day, they shivered with cold at night. Paddy, the *Tara's* mascot, remained faithful. He ambled along with his chums, and refused to be driven away. The guard did not attempt to shoot him. Dogs are the sanitary inspectors of Turkey.

After traversing 280 miles the captives were given in charge of the fierce Senussi, an Arab tribe whose cause was that of the Sultan and not of the British. Everything of value was taken from them ; they possessed nothing

Daring Deeds

but their ragged garments. Until the rainy season the men were compelled to sleep in the open ; when it began they were given verminous tents that made night a long agony. Disease became rife ; two poor fellows died of starvation. Rice, snails, dates in small quantities, and an occasional slice of goat are poor substitutes for a seaman's hearty meal. The victims of the *Tara* were always hungry.

Had the seamen been allowed to remain unemployed they could have made up for lost rest during the day. Instead of which they had to trudge five miles to clean wells or dig trenches for irrigation purposes. Captain Gwatkin Williams, the commander, volunteered to attempt to escape on the off-chance that he might reach a British outpost. He got clear, was recaptured, and beaten and stoned by way of punishment.

The condition of the survivors daily grew worse. Their scanty rations were cut down. They became walking skeletons, and almost gave way to despair, but not quite. In moments of optimism they adopted Macawber's philo-

Perils of the Patrol

sophy, though it was bordering on insanity to hope that 'something would turn up' in that vast waste other than sand flung by the wind. Sore eyes, smarting with the blazing light of the desert, peered across the dazzling yellow and saw nothing but the same unalterable and unbearable landscape. The roughest crossing of the Irish Sea was Paradise to this.

One afternoon the guard seemed to have taken leave of their senses. They and their womenfolk rushed about as though suddenly bereft of reason. Some extraordinary religious custom, a feast day, no doubt. Then weary faces took on a look of brightness. Far away—but, no, it could not be! A motor-car in the desert? What madness!

Some people hold that miracles have ceased to be. It *was* a motor-car in the desert; moreover, it was followed by another and another. The captives yelled like men in a charge, and danced like Dervishes, though their strength was enfeebled by four months of famine and physical decline. Some of them knelt down and thanked God for what

Daring Deeds

is not supposed to happen. From one of the armoured cars the Duke of Westminster jumped out. The men of the *Tara* were saved. For his dash across the Libyan desert the Duke afterward received the D.S.O.¹

There is no word which adequately sums up the colossal task undertaken by the Navy and its auxiliaries. Notwithstanding the utmost vigilance, British marine losses before the close of 1916 totalled 2,000,000 gross tons, which was more than the whole merchant shipping of France previous to the war.² Had we been selfish and allowed neutrals to fend for themselves, there would have been a different tale to tell. That is not the British way. When peace is declared we shall have friends ; Germany will have enemies. “ What blunderers they are ! ” exclaimed Mr Balfour.

¹ The campaign against the Senussi was brought to a successful conclusion early in the following year, when Gaafar Pasha, their Turkish Commander-in-Chief, surrendered.

² The gross tonnage of the British Mercantile Marine in 1914 was 21,045,049. The net loss of British vessels of 1600 tons and over during 1917 was 598, involving a loss of 20 per cent. as compared with 1916, although the cargo actually imported was only about 2 per cent. less. In 1917, 200 merchant vessels of 1600 tons and over were built in British yards and brought into service. They aggregated 1,067,696 tons gross.

Perils of the Patrol

“ They are always wrong ; and they are wrong because they always suppose that if they behave like brutes they can cow their enemies into behaving like cowards. Small is their knowledge of our merchant seamen.”

Two hands were washed off a patrol boat. While swimming about they came across a disreputable old fish trunk that had probably met with a similar disaster. “ This ain’t goin’ to ’old us both,” spluttered the younger of the two, “ an’ I would rather face the Almighty than your missus and the kids without you. Good luck ! ” Small indeed is Potsdam’s knowledge of the spirit of the men who are bearing the burden of the Patrol.

CHAPTER XI

Auxiliary Cruisers at Work

"It is not, I think, too high a claim to make that, next in importance to the valour and devotion of our Navy and Army, the most essential service in this war has been rendered by the Mercantile Marine—indeed, without this aid the splendid achievements of our fighting forces would have been impossible."

SIR EDWARD HAIN

SCORES of armed merchant vessels have been commissioned as H.M. auxiliary cruisers. For the most part their ceaseless vigil goes unsung, even in a newspaper paragraph. The first cuckoo and the largest marrow figure more frequently in the Press. Stately liners have mounted guns and been swallowed up in northern and other mists. To-day they are units of the Silent Service which discounts rather than courts publicity. No department of human activity was ever more correctly named.

Now and again they play a part in a triumph or a tragedy, otherwise no item regarding them appears in print. The interim is wrapped in

Auxiliary Cruisers at Work

mystery, even though they sink submarines by the dozen. The splendid fight of the *Carmania*, the appearance for a brief interval of the *Otranto* in the battle off Coronel, and of the P. and O. liner *Macedonia* with Sturdee's squadron at the Falkland Islands represent the auxiliary cruiser in action. The common round, the daily task are as far removed from the civilian's ken as the man in the moon.

John Bull, secure in his Island Home, admires the vista of his suburban street, patriotically loans money to the State (which is himself) at five per cent., grows wildly enthusiastic over tank banks, and forgets the service which is foster-father and mother, brother and sister of suburb, realm, cash, and tank. Another case of 'out of sight, out of mind,' of ingratitude not intentionally base, but unintentionally negligent. Shareholders in the British Empire, Unlimited, are not to blame because the Board of Directors reveal so little. Capital and dividends are good, so why worry? True enough, but an enlightened public opinion would be a very great asset to the Bluejacket, who is apt to feel just a little 'out of it' when

Daring Deeds

compared with the attention bestowed on his comrades in the Army. A few brief references to deeds of surpassing worth, a lack-lustre *communiqué* on a fight glowing with picturesque details, and "The Admiralty regrets—" are not calculated to arouse exuberant emotion. A patent pill advertisement makes more entertaining reading.

Heroism is an attribute of disaster as well as of victory. The three minutes of life granted to the *Bayano*¹ after she was torpedoed were crowded with heroism. There was no warning, no submarine was seen or heard. Its noisome presence was known only when the deadly weapon had struck home. Where it was could only be surmised. Somewhere out there, awash no doubt, perhaps with one or two of her evil crew on the conning tower endeavouring to pierce the gloom and watch the final agony of the victim and her company. The disaster came like a thief in the night. It just happened.

Those on watch had to grope their way in the darkness. When there is no light it is always a case of 'more haste, less speed.'

¹ See *ante*, p. 153.

Auxiliary Cruisers at Work

The finest discipline in the world does not prevent stumbles and bumps on such an occasion. From the moment of impact it was known that the wound was mortal. The *Bayano* took on a heavy list almost instantaneously, so great was the inrush of water. A medical officer opened the door of his cabin, and instead of stepping on deck walked into the sea. Another officer slashed the ropes which secured a couple of rafts. He could do nothing further. The time was already far spent. They floated off when the ship went down. In the wireless room the operator was knee-deep in water. He stuck to his instrument, and was joined by his companion, who less than sixty seconds before had been asleep in his bunk. Some of the doors jammed and sealed the doom of the unfortunate men behind them. Those who managed to reach the deck remained perfectly calm, and only jumped overboard when Captain Carr gave the word to save themselves.

The commander was on the bridge. Realizing that nothing could be done to save the ship, he did his utmost to save life. Time was so

Daring Deeds

short that, before the boats could be launched, the *Bayano* had gone down. Those which were afterward found were thrown up by the sea. Captain Carr urged a sailor who offered him a lifebelt to save himself, and repeated the command to a lad standing near as he clasped his hand in a farewell grip. That is a magnificent way to die.

Auxiliary armed vessels have robbed the Huns of many a submarine. Some of the pirate ships cost £300,000 apiece, and are not turned out at the rate of three a week, as the people of the Fatherland have been told. The financial aspect of the matter is therefore not insignificant. At the same time it must be remembered that Germany has over 130 building slips which may be utilized for submarines.

While the sinking of an auxiliary cruiser is a feather in the cap and an Iron Cross on the breast of the U-boat commander, the losses of patrol boats from this cause have been relatively small. It is much simpler and easier to attack an unarmed merchant ship. H.M.S. *Vanduara* was patrolling in the North Sea,

Auxiliary Cruisers at Work

when a U-boat was sighted. The British ship was not flying a flag, but before opening fire at a range of about 3000 yards, she hoisted the White Ensign. The German Government made much ado about nothing by alleging that the patrol boat showed no colours. It was pointed out that, instead of facing the music, the submarine submerged when the yacht was still a good 2000 yards away. As the latter was bows on, and the German commander showed unmistakable signs of haste, he was probably far too perturbed to worry about anything of the kind until he had to write up his log. The wolf was upset because the bone had failed to fall into its jaws.

A fine little action which was not officially announced took place off the mouth of the River Plate in November, 1914. It redounded to the credit of that section of the Mercantile Marine which has rolled up the old Red Duster and displays the naval Ensign. The *Orama*, a turbine mail steamer of 12,927 gross tonnage belonging to the Orient Line, came across the *Navarra*, a Hamburg-Amerika liner, and fought her to a finish. Captain Segrave manœuvred

Daring Deeds

his ship so dexterously, and gave the enemy such a pounding, that the German guns were speedily subdued into silence. The shells of the *Orama* found their billet with wonderful precision. The enemy became nothing more nor less than a floating furnace. Choking with smoke and the fumes of picric acid, the crew took to the boats in the nick of time. They had scarcely done so before the magazine of the *Navarra* blew up. Even then the liner did not sink, and required an extra shot or two to make her settle down. Her company surrendered, and were taken on board the *Orama*.

There is a tragic sequel, though it took place nearly three years later. The victor was torpedoed and sunk in October, 1917, but all her men were rescued.

An engagement which resulted in the loss of both ships concerned in it took place between a raider of the *Möwe* type, and the auxiliary cruiser *Alcantara* on the morning of the 29th February, 1916. The British vessel, commanded by Captain T. E. Wardle, R.N., was one of the Royal Mail Company's latest

Auxiliary Cruisers at Work

liners. She was of 15,831 tons, and had only made her maiden trip to South America just previous to the beginning of the Kaiser's great adventure. Her contestant, the *Greif*, was disguised as a Norwegian merchantman. No doubt the preliminary success of the *Möwe* encouraged this further attempt to run the blockade, but whereas extremely favourable weather conditions had aided and abetted the escape of the captor of the *Appam*,¹ such good fortune did not smile on her successor. She was very cleverly disguised, using the adjective in the rough-shod German sense, which emphatically admits that necessity knows no law. While it is quite permissible to fly the flag of another country as a *ruse de guerre* when not in action, one's own colours must be shown before opening fire. The *Greif*, however, had the Norwegian colours painted on her side, denoting her alleged nationality. When the British patrol ship was approaching with a view to finding out particulars as to her business, the message: "I am going to board you," was signalled. Without any

¹ See *ante*, p. 32.

Daring Deeds

hesitation, the answer: "I am a peaceful merchantman flying the Norwegian flag," was given. As is usual in such cases, a boat was lowered from the *Alcantara* to investigate the truth of the matter. Immediately the false deck-gear on the *Greif* was cleared away. Then her real character became evident. So far as can be ascertained, the raider's armament consisted of two 7-in. guns, half a dozen 4-in. guns, and three torpedo tubes.

The fight began at 800 yards, which is very close range and meant warm work. While the *Alcantara* was hurling shells at her target, and making excellent practice, the *Greif* answered with one or more torpedoes. They failed to strike, although shrapnel did considerable injury and knocked out a number of men. A well-placed shot did irretrievable damage to the steering-gear of the British auxiliary, rendering her unmanageable, and consequently placing her at the mercy of her foe. Not that the *Greif* had been allowed to have it all her own way. Already she was on fire in several quarters, but still under



The Duel between the "Alcantara" and the "Greif"
Chas. Pears

Auxiliary Cruisers at Work

control. Seizing his advantage the German commander released another torpedo. The *Alcantara* had fought her first and last action.

Just then another auxiliary, the *Andes*, also of the Royal Mail fleet, put in a timely appearance. The raider, suffering smartly from the wounds given by her adversary, was not in the best of conditions for a second contest. She made a run for it, the new-comer in hot pursuit. Suddenly the enemy changed her course, and aimed several torpedoes at the *Andes*. They were dodged with dexterity, and the chase continued. Shells swept the deck of the raider. Then shots from another quarter crashed against the already stricken ship. A terrific explosion, likely enough of a number of mines she had intended sowing in the open sea, finished her off.

Tradition has it that the light cruiser which had picked up the *Greif* in this unexpected fashion signalled to the *Andes*, "Sorry, your bird." If it is not true, it ought to be. The captain certainly paid a handsome and well-deserved compliment to the commander of

Daring Deeds

the auxiliary by congratulating him on his success.

The British losses amounted to five officers and sixty-nine men. The total complement of the *Greif* is believed to have been over 300 ; of these five officers and 115 men were rescued and taken prisoners.

In war we are prone to forget the ordinary perils incident to navigation. The *Oceanic*, one of the crack ships of the White Star Line, had but a short life as an armed cruiser. She was wrecked off the Shetlands less than a month after she had been commissioned. Her company was saved, and although at first it was thought that the vessel might be refloated, when the attempt was made her hull parted and she became a total loss. On this occasion an heroic little crew of fishermen was responsible for the succour of hundreds of men. A pigmy of a trawler, the *Glenogil* of Aberdeen, approached the giant as near as she dared, transferred as many of the *Oceanic's* crew as she could hold, took them to another steamer, and then returned for the remainder. After seeing to the safety of all, the plucky fellows

Auxiliary Cruisers at Work

went back and secured as many articles of value as they could cram on board their packet. The last man to leave was Captain W. F. Slayter, R.N., an officer with a record of over thirty years' service. In the subsequent naval court-martial he was acquitted of blame, as was also Commander Henry Smith, R.N.R., who had commanded the *Oceanic* when employed in the Merchant Service.

Another White Star liner turned man-of-war was sunk by mine off the Irish coast one bitterly cold day in January, 1917. She was the *Laurentic*, a triple-screw steamer of 14,892 tons gross, formerly one of the largest vessels employed in the Canadian service. It was the second time that her commander had been maltreated by enemy action. Captain Norton was in command of H.M.S. *Hogue* when that cruiser was torpedoed in the North Sea. His report to the Admiralty on the loss concluded with the sentence: "I have the honour to submit that I may be appointed to another ship as soon as I can get a kit," which reveals the iron nerve and unconquerable courage of the man.

Daring Deeds

The *Laurentic* had only left harbour about an hour and a half before, and was steaming full speed ahead with Captain Norton on the bridge, when a violent explosion occurred on the port side abreast of the foremast, followed within a few seconds by a second explosion abreast of the engine-room. The latter stopped the dynamo, plunging the ship in total darkness and rendering the wireless unworkable. After telegraphing "Full speed astern," he sent up a rocket, and ordered the boats to be swung out for immediate use, if necessary. When it was found impossible to beach the vessel, and that she was gradually sinking, the men were ordered into the boats. To make quite certain that not a living soul remained on board, Captain Norton searched the ship in company with the chief steward and by the light of an electric torch.

The most terrible experience of all was yet to come. Although it is very probable that a few of the ship's complement of 470 men were killed as a result of the two explosions, the majority got safely away. Of these only 120 survived the bitter

Auxiliary Cruisers at Work

weather. The remainder died of exposure. One boat, containing seventeen frozen bodies, was picked up many hours later; in another there were only five survivors out of twenty. Captain Norton spent seven hours in a boat which shipped so many seas that it was nearly full of water when picked up by a trawler. Mine-sweepers covered many miles, attracted by the rocket, the sound of the explosions, and the flares carried by the boats, and after picking up a load of survivors, promptly searched for others.

Arrived on shore one young sailor, a lad of seventeen, seated himself before a piano in a camp to which he was taken and started playing "Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag, and smile, smile, smile," his comrades joining in vocally with right good heart. Captain Norton's wonderful spirit must have infected his crew. When giving evidence at an inquest on some of the victims, he casually remarked, "Naturally, I was the last to leave." One hopes that he did not have to provide himself with yet another kit.

The armed auxiliary *Calgarian*, a magnificent

Daring Deeds

Allan liner of 17,515 tons, was engaged in protecting a convoy on the 1st March, 1918, when she was struck by a torpedo near the forward boilers. Steps were being taken to make temporary repairs, when two more torpedoes hit the ship. The last weapon exploded in the engine-room, killing a number of men.

Thanks to the prompt assistance of destroyers and trawlers, nearly 400 of the crew were landed at various ports on the north coast of Ireland. There is good reason to believe that the submarine lies at no great distance from its victim.

The *Clan McNaughton*, an armed merchant cruiser of 4985 tons, was probably lost owing to bad weather. She went down with all hands, numbering 280 officers and men. Despite the most careful search, all that remained was wreckage, and even that was not positively identified as having belonged to the missing ship.

Missing ship! The moan of the wind and the sigh of the sea is in that brief sentence.

CHAPTER XII

In the Sea of Dead Men's Bones

"I was now landed, and safe on shore, and began to look up and thank God that my life was saved, in a case wherein there was, some minutes before, scarce any room to hope. I believe it is impossible to express, to the life, what the ecstasies and transports of the soul are, when it is so saved, as I may say, out of the very grave."—ROBINSON CRUSOE.

THIS yarn concerns the strange doings of the company of a certain steamship called the *Coquet*, formerly on *Lloyd's Register* as a vessel of 4300 odd tons, the property of the Mercantile Steamship Company. Her captain was Mr Arnold C. B. Groom,¹ her complement thirty-one in all, her position at the time of the opening of the story somewhere between Torrevieja, which is in Spain, and Port Said, which is at the entrance of the Suez Canal, and one of the wickedest and filthiest places in the wide world.

¹ This chapter is based on his report to the Imperial Merchant Service Guild.

Daring Deeds

The Mediterranean has been a happy hunting-ground for pirates from time immemorial. There are plenty of dead men's bones beneath the blue waters of that southern sea. It is conventional and in keeping with orthodox pictures to characterize the *Mare Internum* of the sturdy Romans as smiling. We shall see that it can be horribly sullen when it likes. To the ghastly relics of long-forgotten crimes the Huns, both German and Austrian, have added their quota, which will be long-remembered. Many a good ship and her gallant crew lie deep in mud as a result of their depredations. The grave of the *Coquet* is there.

The people of the submarine responsible for the deed were worthy of their forbears of Barbary. The old familiar warning was given, plus interest. A preliminary shot across the bows, a second over the bridge, and a third under the stern were considered necessary to bring the ship to a standstill. Why such prodigal waste of ammunition was indulged in remains the secret of the gentleman disporting the Austrian crown on the badge of his cap who was standing on the conning

In the Sea of Dead Men's Bones

tower of the sub. The *Coquet* was completely at his mercy ; she had not so much as a pea-shooter on board.

When the victims had shoved off in a couple of boats they were ordered to come alongside. There was no alternative, although the heavy swell made the proceeding highly dangerous. Captain Groom was then held as hostage, while his men conducted some of the pirates, armed with cutlasses and revolvers in the approved style, to the *Coquet*. There is this much to be said for the Austrians : they gave the British crew a reasonable time to pack up their personal belongings and stow them in the boats. Their hospitality began and ended at that. While this was going on the enemy helped themselves to anything they fancied. Having secured all the loot which their strictly limited accommodation allowed, time-fuse bombs were fixed in position for the purpose of destroying the ship. In due course there was an ugly roar, the sound of a rending of plates, and the *Coquet* cocked up her stern and went under.

On their return journey the men received

Daring Deeds

ample demonstration of the frailty of their craft. The boats were thoroughly seaworthy, but however watertight a boat may be at the seams, there is no guarantee that the sea will not slop over the gunwale. And slop over the sides it did in right good measure. Bailing became an urgent necessity long before they were alongside the cause of their misfortunes.

When they arrived Captain Groom was informed that he was at liberty to leave. In the circumstances the crew would have been safer had they been taken prisoners. They were many miles from land, already the wind had chilled the marrow in their bones, and their clothes were soaked.

Very wisely the captain had stowed away a sextant, chronometer, and chart in one of the boats. Such forethought, while highly commendable, was rendered null and void by the brutality of the submarine commander. Before bidding them farewell he ordered the boats to be searched. The instruments of navigation were purloined. There is just one word in the English language that fits the

In the Sea of Dead Men's Bones

crime. Presumably the Austrian had no wish to commit 'murder,' but he wanted to give his victims an excellent opportunity to drown.

Captain Groom pointed out the heinousness of the crime the commander was about to commit, but his appeal made no impression on his listener. He laughed. "I'll save the next boat I come across and send her to look for you," was his cynical reply. No advice as to the direction they had better take was proffered. What was expected of them was that they would go under.

The company of the *Coquet* sailed away from the submarine, shaping a course in the direction of the routes taken by vessels journeying between Egypt and Malta. Heavy hearts were lightened with the thought of early rescue. Some friendly look-out would spot them and give them shelter 'tween decks. They never doubted. Sailors are incurable optimists, which is one of the reasons why they are sailors.

Dusk succeeded day. Still there was no sign of anything moving on the face of the waters. Noah could not have felt more lonely.

Daring Deeds

Just before night a steamer was discovered moving along in the far distance. Red flares were shown. There was no answer. If they were seen the captain must have regarded the lights as a snare. The vessel pursued the even tenor of her way and disappeared.

Darkness set in, and with it a lumpy sea and a keener wind. It was only with extreme difficulty that the boats were kept head on to the sea. It became too boisterous to sail. The men had to take turns at bailing, never an inviting job. They sat in their soaking clothes, ankle-deep in water. Thus the long and tedious hours of darkness wore away, and strength with them. Two and a half biscuits and a little water make a sorry meal. A mug of cocoa would have been as nectar to the poor famished fellows, although, in general, mariners are 'fed up' with it in more ways than one.

Dawn came, revealing the same dreary expanse of sea and sky. Nothing happened. For three more days and nights the prospect remained unchanged. The boats had now separated and lost touch with each other.

In the Sea of Dead Men's Bones

Leaks added to the general misery ; bits of clothing were used to stop them. ' While there is life there is hope ' ; there was none to spare of either in the captain's craft. Several of the seventeen men and boys who constituted the passengers could render little further service to their fellow-sufferers. The wet and cold had got into their bones and made them almost as useless as a rusty piston. If only the laggard wintry sun had made its appearance and put a little warmth into them ; it was usually skulking behind ominous-looking clouds. The four boys were helpless with sickness. Provisions were running low, the supply of fresh water was perilously short. To drink from the sea meant madness.

Very early on the morning of the 10th Captain Groom saw land. Like the steamer which had passed them several days before, it was a great way off. Yet it was balm for tired eyes. Hope welled up again. The crew must have felt like a condemned man reprieved at the eleventh hour. A treacherous short sea arose, making it unsafe to use a sail, even when reefed. The mast had to be unshipped,

Daring Deeds

and with two oars was used as a sea anchor. For five mortal hours the famished crew saw safety in the distance and imminent peril in their immediate surroundings. When the wind moderated a little, resort was had to the sail once more. Then the breeze died down, and the half-dead men took to the oars. Progress was now very slow.

Eventually the boat was coaxed into a little bay where there was apparently a safe landing and what appeared to be a row of dwellings of some sort. Safe landing and buildings proved delusions. While trying to beach the boat she was nearly swamped twice, and on closer acquaintance the buildings turned out to be caves, presumably long since abandoned. Not a living soul was to be seen.

A welcome discovery, however, was the finding of good drinking water. Having slaked their thirst and dined liberally off limpets and biscuits, the exhausted crew flung themselves on the sand, and slept. Captain Groom, the second mate, and two engineers kept watch in turn. Their knowledge of the place extended no further than the fact that

In the Sea of Dead Men's Bones

it was some part of Northern Africa. For all they knew it might swarm with savage beasts.

The following morning a search party was formed for the purpose of finding an inhabitant. After walking a considerable distance, man Friday was discovered in the person of an Arab. This individual showed himself quite a friendly fellow, and did not object to accompany the men to the camp. There he was interrogated by a Greek fireman, who spoke Arabic. 'Friday' suggested that he should pilot the shipwrecked band to the nearest port. This excellent idea would have been carried out had it been practicable. But in its present condition the boat was useless, despite all the exertions of the ship's carpenter to repair the damage it had sustained. The craft was no longer seaworthy; little better, indeed, than a derelict. The only possible solution of the problem was for one or two of the crew to accompany 'Friday' on foot and arrange for the rescue of the others. This was agreed to, and the party started off.

Those who remained behind determined to

Daring Deeds

exact what comfort there was to be had from the decidedly limited means at their disposal. The cave dwellings were damp and stank with age, but one was found slightly less unpleasant than the others, and a roaring fire soon flamed up inside. Dry sand is not at all a bad resting-place on a sunny day ; it is decidedly uncongenial on a damp night, as the men had found after their previous experience. They had awakened with all manner of aches and pains, and determined not to repeat the experiment.

Next day the crew discovered that they were not so far removed from the amenities of civilization as they had believed. Warfare being one of the signs of the advance of knowledge, if we may judge by the present state of affairs, perhaps they should have been better prepared for what happened. A shower of bullets suddenly fell among them, apparently from nowhere, for nobody had heard approaching footsteps or seen anything but old familiar faces. The shots had been fired by a couple of Arabs on a neighbouring hill. The mariners had no weapons with which to

In the Sea of Dead Men's Bones

defend themselves. All they could do was to take cover.

Presently the enemy appeared in force—a dozen or fifteen of them, all armed with murderous-looking weapons. The captain was the first to fall, though he was not dangerously hurt. The carpenter was mortally wounded, one of the lads was killed, and the steward was floating dead in the water when Captain Groom recovered consciousness. All the others had been taken prisoners, with the exception of a sailor, badly injured, and therefore not worth troubling about.

The Bedouins had disappeared and new arrivals had come upon the scene. Luckily for the captain, they proved to be friends. An Italian steamer drew up and disembarked the commander of the Fort of Marsa Susu and a number of native soldiers. Although they scoured the surrounding country to find the Arabs, their search was in vain.

The terrible adventures of the captain of the *Coquet* were at an end.

CHAPTER XIII

The Mailed Fist at Sea

"The German campaign on the seas has been a campaign of sheer murder on a vaster scale than that indulged in by any of the old-time pirates of the Spanish Main."—THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

LET it be said once for all that the British people are not biased in their opinion of the sterling qualities of the men who work their ships ; it is upheld by all the world. Even Germany, in her heart of hearts, knows and realizes the splendid asset which is one of our proudest possessions. The helplessness of the Mercantile Marine of the enemy is proof positive of the majesty and might of our Sea Power. The sea-borne commerce of Germany is simply non-existent. There is none. What shipping she possesses in home ports is gathering rust, dirt, and barnacles. In her ruthless submarine campaign alone has she scored anything approaching success, and that success has been gained at the loss of her soul and of nearly fifty per cent. of her

The Mailed Fist at Sea

underwater craft. That is a very exacting price to pay, for if we win the war—and we must—it will spell a second defeat for her when hostilities have ceased. Do not imagine for a moment that the *Vaterland* will be tolerated in the port of Southampton. Every docker would ‘down tools,’ to the applause of an appreciative and sympathetic public.

Our Austrian enemies have aroused our righteous indignation to a less appreciable extent. We have had less to do with them. On some occasions they have earned our disgust, as in their inhuman treatment of the crew of the *Coquet*; on others sufficient facts have been forthcoming to show that their free will has been largely subordinated to the dictates of their confederates. Here is a case in point:

A British ship, the *Sailor Prince*, was shelled by an Austrian submarine in the Mediterranean. The crew of twenty-seven took to the boats, and came up with a steamer called the *Borulas*, manned by Greeks. Some three hundred odd refugees had crowded on her at Athens, intent on getting away from the turmoil of

Daring Deeds

conflicting interests in the peninsula. They were a motley crowd—Greeks, half-castes, Egyptians, and a solitary American woman, on whose experiences this narrative is based.¹ The shipwrecked sea-dogs had not been aboard very long before the submarine, which had left them wanderers on the face of the sea, rose from the waves and was silhouetted against the horizon.

“ I remember,” writes my authority, “ the white wash of the sea off the submarine decks, though it rose half-way between us and the sky-line. I remember the instantaneousness of the flash of fire and the reverberating boom which caught us just in time to mingle with the crack of an exploding shell and the loud swish of a geyser that it threw into the air. It was the explosion of that shell that settled our fate. If the submarine could have used some other kind of signal the panic would not have been so instantaneous and complete. But the concussion shook the ship ; and all those buried in the bowels of the ship—firemen,

¹ Eleanor Franklin Egan, in the *Saturday Evening Post* (Philadelphia), 28th April, 1917.

The Mailed Fist at Sea

engineers, sailors, steerage passengers, everybody—thought just one thing, and that thing was, ‘Torpedoed!’ ”

Women went mad, flung their children into the sea, fought their way to already overcrowded boats, were pitched into the water. The Austrian commander, having committed the supreme crime against the brotherhood of the seas, stood surveying the welter of humanity struggling for life only a few yards from his conning tower. Tears were coursing down his cheeks. We have heard of the repentant thief; here was the repentant murderer. Perhaps he had children at home, and little white faces were gazing at him with vacant eyes from the fast-moving waters below. The commander gave an order. A collapsible boat put off and returned to the submarine deeply laden. The crew on deck tried artificial means to bring their victims back to life.

“Are there any more people aboard?” the Austrian yelled in English to a passing boat that held so many folk that an extra pound or two would have sunk it. “Are there any more people aboard?” The

Daring Deeds

American woman had been picked up by this boat. "No!" she shouted ironically, with all the voice she could muster, which was almost drowned by the hubbub of strange tongues. "No! Can't you see?"

"Well, go back to your ship; we are not murderers!" the commander answered. His words inspired confidence, though two guns were trained on the *Borulas*.

The ship was floating and floatable. Twenty-five of the Englishmen were still on board, stolid, quiet, self-reliant. They had virtually assumed command when the vessel was struck. With them, as always, it had been the unbroken tradition of "Women and children first." They had helped them into the boats, thrown unsinkable articles to those in the water, lowered rope-ladders. They caught hold of demented and half-demented women, and kept them from doing harm to themselves and to others. Three dived in to rescue children; two never returned. When it became clear that the commander of the submarine meant what he said, they worked with almost superhuman might to get the crowd

The Mailed Fist at Sea

back to the ship. That was why the casualties were so few ; why, indeed, the stricken *Borulas* reached land with her cosmopolitan cargo of white, black, and dusky humanity. Had the passengers been obliged to depend on the native crew the ship would have foundered. Engineers and stokers refused to go below ; they were suffering from ‘ nerves,’ which is sometimes synonymous with cowardice. So the sea-dogs who had been submarined twice clattered down the steel ladders to the nether regions or clambered up to the bridge above, and assumed command. Well, that is a Briton’s prerogative, and he has earned it.

The American survivor pays a glowing tribute to these splendid fellows. “ When I got back to London a month later,” she says, “ I went to the British Admiralty and detailed to an officer there every incident connected with their conduct of which I was sure. And I really thought I should have heard later of their being decorated—or, at least, honourably mentioned. But, you see, they were only British merchant sailormen, and—‘ England expects every man to do his duty.’ ”

Daring Deeds

Perhaps Fielding was not far wrong when he wrote that "all human flesh is not the same flesh ; there is one kind of flesh of landsmen and another of seamen."

The brutal savagery of the Germans when they wilfully murdered 1198 men, women, and children on board the *Lusitania* constituted the greatest crime in maritime history. If on no subsequent occasion the death-roll has reached so high a total, small thanks are due to the Germans. Unfortunately a number of ships have since been sunk where the list of missing has been considerable.

The application of the mailed fist at sea is thoroughly in keeping with the conduct of the German Army in its passage through Belgium. It merely gives effect to the policy expressed in the Berlin declaration of the 27th August, 1914, when it was stated with reference to alleged misconduct on the part of citizens not legally entitled to bear arms, that "The only means of preventing surprise attacks from the civil population has been to interfere with unrelenting severity, and to create examples which, by their frightfulness,

The Mailed Fist at Sea

would be a warning to the whole country." It was General Ludendorff, First Quartermaster-General of the German Army and prime favourite of Von Hindenburg, who succeeded in convincing the Kaiser and the Nation's Hero that joy bells and peace bells, and every other conceivable bell that had not been flung into the melting-pot, would be ringing throughout the Empire before 1917 was ended, if only a ruthless submarine campaign was waged. General von Falkenhayn summed up German public opinion when he said: "If we win we shall have the neutrals with us. If we lose, we lose." The United States was then a neutral; she is so no longer.

A disaster which sent a shudder round the world, more especially because it took place in home waters and within sight of land, happened in November 1917. Nearly eighty people, including thirty-nine of the crew, perished in the disaster which befel the Elder Dempster liner *Apapa*, a steamer of 7832 tons gross, built in 1914. She was torpedoed amidships early one moonlight morning, and within a few hours would have completed

Daring Deeds

her homeward voyage from the West Coast of Africa. The horror of the crime was intensified by the firing of a second torpedo ten minutes later. This struck a boat containing twenty or thirty people, the majority of whom were either killed or drowned.

Nor was this all. The set of the tide and the wind prevented one of the boats from getting away. Despite every effort the craft refused to budge, and hugged the starboard side of the liner, near where the deadly weapon had struck. The water was pouring in, had already flooded the engine-room. Each minute the list became more and more marked. One or two venturesome spirits, realizing their imminent peril, jumped into the sea and swam out of the danger zone. What they feared actually happened. The stays of one of the funnels, unable to bear the strain of the weight thrown on them by the angle the ship had assumed, suddenly snapped like whipcord. There was a horrible wrenching sound, and the great smoke-stack crashed athwart the boat, crushing its occupants.

Captain Toft, who was on the bridge with

The Mailed Fist at Sea

the chief officer, went down with his ship. After swimming about for a time he reached an upturned boat, and was picked up. One boat was beached at a popular seaside resort. Those who were in it jumped out, ran across the sands, and made their way to an hotel. Others were rescued by a tramp steamer and a patrol vessel.

The crew carried out their work with dispatch, despite the fact that the only light at their disposal was afforded by the moon. There is ample evidence to show that boats were launched sufficient to accommodate all. Had it not been for the firing of the second torpedo, the loss of life would have been considerably less. There was no need to send this later messenger of death; the steamer was already doomed. It was fired to prevent as many people as possible from being saved, and the blood-lust of the Germans was abundantly satisfied.

Another homeward-bound liner, twice torpedoed without warning, was the *Laconia*, a Cunarder of over 18,000 tons gross, built in 1912. Only six passengers lost their lives.

Daring Deeds

All would have been rescued had these unfortunates not been compelled to spend a winter night in an open boat on the Atlantic. The other occupants of the same craft reached the Irish coast. Those who died succumbed to exposure. A similar number of the crew were drowned. Of these, two were firemen, and three trimmers. Probably they lost their lives because the first torpedo struck abaft the engine-room, while the second hit the ship in the engine-room itself. The majority of the *Laconia's* complement had already experienced what it felt like to be torpedoed. They had been on the *Franconia*, the sister ship of the *Laconia*, when she was sunk in the Mediterranean while on transport duty. So far as the necessity for the firing of the second torpedo was concerned, the case is in no way different from that of the *Apapa*. The vessel was already done for. Calculated cruelty was the sole reason for the outrage.

Two mishaps, in no sense attributable to negligence, occurred in the launching of the boats. The falls got jammed when one of them was being lowered, and it was found



Torpedoed without Warning : Men on Board a British Steamer overwhelmed by the
Explosion of a Torpedo

Chas. Pears

The Mailed Fist at Sea

necessary to hack the ropes to get it clear. Another struck the stern of the liner, causing it to leak badly. The German commander actually asked particulars regarding the ship of the passengers in one of the boats. After his curiosity had been satisfied, he graciously vouchsafed the opinion that they would come to no harm, and would be picked up by a patrol vessel. As a matter of fact, a patrol boat did come along, and also rescued fourteen other victims whose steamer had been torpedoed. The last persons to leave the *Laconia* were Captain Irvine, the chief officer, the purser, and a wireless operator. All four fell into the water, but were picked up.

Some of the passengers spent a night of terror. It was exceedingly dark, and as there was a heavy swell, the boat in which they were seated speedily became water-logged and could not be steered. According to the Rev. F. D. Sargend, O.P., who was travelling to England to take up an appointment as Army Chaplain, one or two of the weaker occupants were washed overboard by the waves, one of the crew fell into the sea and

Daring Deeds

could not be recovered, and the bodies of others who died were committed to the deep so as to lighten the boat. Those who lived through this awful experience were nine hours in the water.

The *Arabic*, a White Star liner of 15,801 tons gross, was torpedoed without warning in August, 1915. The total number of those on board was 429; of these 390 were saved, and thirty-nine reported as missing. Of the last-mentioned, eighteen were passengers. There is all the difference in the world between being shipwrecked in the Atlantic in summer in the broad daylight, and having to abandon ship in the middle of winter at night. It is an awful business at any time, even under the best possible weather conditions, but the experience of the survivors of the *Arabic* were certainly less painful than those of the *Laconia*. Considering that only ten minutes elapsed between the liner being struck and her disappearance from mortal ken, it reflected the greatest possible credit on Captain W. Finch and his crew that in so short a space of time rafts were got out and fourteen boats lowered.

The Mailed Fist at Sea

Unfortunately two of the latter capsized. The raft is probably the oldest form of shipping known to man. It has certainly come into its own again as a life-saving apparatus.

The *Arabic* was bound for New York. She was proceeding at about 16½ knots off the Fastnet Lighthouse, four miles south-west of Cape Clear, at the extreme south-west of Ireland, when she met with disaster. A few minutes before some of the horrified passengers had seen a ship assume a heavy list, and then go down bows first. This proved to be the s.s. *Dunsley*, which had already attracted the notice of the sea wolf.

Despite the greatest possible vigilance no one seems to have actually seen the submarine, although the captain on the bridge observed the torpedo speeding in the direction of the ship when it was some 300 feet away. The submarine had evidently taken up an excellent position on the starboard side, for the missile was coming at right angles, and struck the vessel about 100 feet from the stern. The explosion that followed not only worked havoc

Daring Deeds

below, but blew one of the lifeboats to something closely resembling matchwood.

Captain Finch and the *Arabic* went down together. On coming to the surface the officer found himself surrounded by a mass of wreckage. Although one of his legs was injured by a piece of floating timber, he assisted a couple of firemen and a lady with a baby to get on to a raft that was drifting near-by. Miss Stella Carol, the well-known soprano, endeavoured to keep up the spirits of her companions in one of the boats by singing to them, and she also lent a hand with an oar. Women have acquitted themselves with strength in open boats on the high seas during the war.

The captain paid high tribute to the efficiency and bravery of the engine-room staff. In his opinion they were worthy of twenty Victoria Crosses. Third Engineer London, who was responsible for the carrying out of the orders from the bridge, went to his death standing at his post.

The mine is the twin-brother of the submarine. The two have worked well together for the Huns.

The Mailed Fist at Sea

Two soldiers were walking along the parade at Dover on the morning of the last Sunday of February, 1916. They were discussing the only subject there is to talk about since the condition of the weather has been eliminated from conversation by the pressure of more important affairs. There had been an immense effort on the part of the Germans to storm Douaumont, one of the outer forts of Verdun, and the question the two companions-in-arms had set themselves to answer was the likelihood of the Crown Prince and his satellites achieving their ambition.

“They’ll never do it, not if the war drags into the next century. Don’t you realize——”

The conversation was never finished. It was interrupted by the war in being. There was a dull roar out to sea that put a full stop to the wisdom or foolishness of the half-completed sentence. Two pairs of eyes turned automatically in the direction whence the ominous sound had come, and there saw a tremendous column of water flung up and descend.

Daring Deeds

"The Imperial German Navy at work," the lance-corporal vouchsafed as both men began to run in the direction of the harbour, their main idea being to render assistance should opportunity afford. Soldiers and sailors are built that way.

Out there, not more than a mile and a half from Shakespeare's Cliff, the outward-bound liner *Maloja* was settling down. She was the largest vessel of the Peninsular and Oriental fleet, with 456 men, women, and children on board—or rather had been on board three seconds before. God alone knew how many there were three seconds later.

Passengers were flung violently on the deck ; a little child was lifted off its legs, hurled skyward, and lost sight of ; some folk were probably killed outright. The remainder put on their lifebelts and walked calmly to the boats, which had been swung out ready for any emergency long before the disaster took place. There was no panic : all faced death as comrades. One passenger calmly took off his lifebelt and handed it to a doctor. It was his way of paying a delicate compliment to a

The Mailed Fist at Sea

noble profession. Snow and hail added to the misery, but did not complete it. The icy sea did that.

One of the most deadly agencies known to maritime warfare had done this fell work. A mine had struck the vessel and blown in the starboard side of the second saloon. Great waves poured through the huge rent, and speedily reached the heart of the ship. Below deck all was done that could be done. The screws were reversed, and a brave attempt made to beach the vessel. She only gained more water. So vast was the intake that the engine-room had to be abandoned. The tireless cylinders only stopped when the liner disappeared. They went on in their magnificent strength, without let or hindrance, until the deep swallowed them up. Some of the doors of the watertight compartments became jammed, and being rendered useless, failed to stem the flood. The toughest steel is no match for T.N.T., as many a ship has found since *annus mirabilis* 1914.

On the bridge Captain Irving, R.N.R., remained resolutely imperturbable, directing

Daring Deeds

the lowering of the boats. He was still clinging to the rail, as though loath to leave, when the liner was heeling over, an apprentice with him. Both saved themselves by tobogganing down the side of the *Maloja* as she capsized.

Destiny plays weird tricks on such occasions. She juggles with life and death as a conjurer with a ball. A baby was found floating on its back, to be restored to its grief-stricken mother some hours later. In the interim the mite had been cared for by rough-and-ready but kind-hearted fellows in the none-too-clean engine-room of a trawler. A little girl, apparently deserted, was picked up by a passenger while the liner was still afloat. He fastened a life-belt around the frail body, and was about to take her in his care when a lady came up and snatched her away. The child's would-be rescuer afterward identified her in the mortuary by the red cloak she was wearing. A soldier jumped from the *Maloja* and swam toward a trawler. He was helped in, but no sooner had he placed his feet on deck than the vessel also struck a mine. She joined the

The Mailed Fist at Sea

Maloja in the underseas. The soldier was rescued a second time and safely landed.

The *Empress of Fort William*, a steamer bound for Dunkirk with 3500 tons of coal, made a valiant attempt to go to the assistance of the liner. It was not her captain's fault that she failed. When off Dover he saw the P. and O. boat settling down by the stern. Realizing the urgency of the matter, he sent the chief officer to tell the engineer to "whack her up." The boats were also ordered to be got ready. Before the captain was able to approach the wreck, he and his crew were compelled to save themselves. The *Maloja*, a splendid ship of 12,431 tons, was twenty-nine minutes a-dying; the tank steamer kept her head above water twenty minutes after striking the mine. A survivor, who spent three-quarters of an hour alternately swimming and floating, saw the *Empress of Fort William* blown up while he was battling with the waves.

Dover, as a naval harbour, is naturally a great place for vessels of the tug and destroyer breeds. As soon as the explosion occurred, several of these craft rushed to the scene of

Daring Deeds

the disaster. Their commanders are familiar with urgent orders. When they were yet some distance from the *Maloja*, the difficulty of rendering adequate assistance became obvious. Not only was a heavy sea running, but the ship was still moving astern. Thus, while the rescue vessels were unable to approach, the boats on the liner were exceedingly difficult to get away. According to the evidence of eye-witnesses, one boat had been successfully launched, when it drifted underneath another which was being lowered. It capsized, flinging its occupants into the water. No. 15 boat was blown to pieces by the explosion. The heavy list of the ship to starboard rendered the boats on the opposite side unavailable. An attempt was made to use one of them, but it proved a failure. The people were tipped out. Once again life-rafts proved invaluable.

When the captain made his report he paid a glowing tribute to the passengers and the crew, both European and native. They "behaved splendidly." Although the captain and officers were all picked up, it is noteworthy



Men of the "Diomed" clinging to upturned Boats after the Shelling of their Vessel
F. Matania

The Mailed Fist at Sea

that not one of them left the liner in a boat. They were taken out of the water or managed to swim to something floatable. Included in the 301 persons saved was Brigadier-General M'Leod; of those missing, forty-nine were passengers, twenty were members of the European crew, and eighty-six were Lascars.

Another P. and O. liner shared a similar fate to the *Maloja*. This was the s.s. *Mongolia*, which struck a mine off Bombay and survived just over a quarter of an hour. The canister is thought to have been laid by the German raider *Wolf*, and to have formed part of a regular minefield. Nearly all the casualties, reported to be twenty-three, were confined to the heroes of the engine-room, although 470 people were on board.

In one of the boats that got away there was no sailor, and consequently the land-lubbers in her did what most people would do in the circumstances—let her drift. A hospital ship was seen, but, like the Levite of old, passed by, though without malice aforethought. The little company was eventually rescued by

Daring Deeds

the coasting vessel *Sabarmarti*, already well laden with passengers, for she carried 600. The process was difficulty in the extreme. As was the case when the *Maloja* went down, the sea was running high, and had the boat been dashed against the *Sabarmarti* she would certainly have been stoved in. The captain handled his ship so carefully that eventually every member of the shipwrecked band was transferred without mishap by means of rope ladders, never at any time anything more than a source of anxiety to those who are more accustomed to saloon staircases. One of those who found good cheer awaiting him on the coaster was deeply distressed by the loss of his dog. When the vessel arrived at Bombay the animal was there awaiting him. It had found a place in one of the other boats.

Most sailors believe in a Day of Judgment. There are some ugly cases to be tried at the Last Tribunal. One of them concerns the sinking of the s.s. *Diomed*. A submarine smashed up pretty well everything on board. When there was precious little ship left, the captain

The Mailed Fist at Sea

and quartermaster dead, and the chief officer grievously wounded, the crew lowered the two remaining boats. The first, rendered unseaworthy by shell-fire, filled and capsized. The second was almost engulfed by an explosion in the steamer, but its occupants picked up those of their comrades who had not grasped the upturned craft. The submarine commander, a witness of these terrible happenings, merely shook his fist at his victims, shouted something unintelligible, and went on his way rejoicing. Seven men perished; the others were rescued by a T.B.D.

At Wilhelmshaven, when German troops were embarking for China in July 1900, the Apostle of the Mailed Fist told his soldiers to make themselves "more frightful than the Huns under Attila. See that for a thousand years no enemy mentions the very name of 'Germany' without shuddering." The policy of *Schrecklichkeit* is now being pursued on the high seas, and still the British mariner comes and goes on his way, disturbed maybe, but never dismayed.

CHAPTER XIV

The Gentle Art of Submarine-chasing

"It was the arrogant hope of the enemy that the methods of 'frightfulness' which were so ruthlessly practised in the destruction of merchant vessels at sea would in effect increase the difficulties of manning and operating the British Merchant Service. In this respect the enemy has been completely disillusioned, and the fearless bravery, cool skill, and irrepressible sense of public duty of every section of British seafarers, no matter on what class of craft they have been employed, are the admiration of the civilized world."—DUKE OF BUCCLEUCH.

THE submarine, being by nature an elusive and wily craft, is as slippery as the proverbial eel. It is the bully of the seas and, like most members of that fraternity, a coward at heart. Given to hitting below the belt and stabbing from the dark, one seldom hears of a U-boat indulging in a straightforward, stand-up fight. Its ways are mysterious, unsocial, Ishmaelitish.

If sighted at long range when running on the surface, it presents so small a target that the likelihood of a direct hit is remote.

The Art of Submarine-chasing

However speedy a pursuing vessel may be—and some of the more recent types of destroyer are exceedingly fleet—the probability is that the submarine will be ‘down and under’ long before the keenest gun-layer has brought his weapon to bear on the enemy. Despite these serious disabilities, the look-out who has really sighted a U-boat has accomplished much toward securing a capture.

Submarine-spotting is not nearly so easy as it seems. Whales and derelict barrels have been mistaken for them; spars and swabsticks have been reported, and even shot at, as periscopes. The cardinal maxim for the hunters does not go quite so far as the old recipe for jugged hare: “first catch your hare.” The first thing to do is to see it; the second is either to take steps to secure it, or, if that be impossible, to report its whereabouts to the nearest fellow who is equipped for tackling the water-rat. Many stories have already been related in these pages of wonderful deeds of prowess in circumventing the enemy,¹ but giving a submarine

¹ See *ante*, pp. 109-124.

Daring Deeds

the slip, although highly meritorious, has the decided disadvantage of leaving the vermin at large to carry on its nefarious practices.

The most important factor, so far as eluding submarines is concerned, if we accept the statement of no less an authority than Sir Eric Geddes, "is not an appliance; it is a gift of God given to men on the ships. It is their eyesight. It is the good look-out that is kept." He has told us that: "If a submarine is sighted by the look-out on a vessel, whether the vessel is armed or not, it is seven to three on the ship in favour of getting away; out of every ten attacks when the submarine is sighted by the ship, seven of them fail, but of every ten attacks when the submarine is not sighted, eight ships go down. It is seven to three on the ship if the submarine is sighted, and four to one against it if it is not." ¹

Many and divers methods are used to scotch the marauders of the deep. It is permissible to mention only a few. There is no infallible appliance, though a highly desirable asset is speed. Even that quality has been set at

¹ Speech in the House of Commons, 1st November, 1917.

The Art of Submarine-chasing

nought by being close handy. You will doubtless recollect the case of the *Thordis*. This tough little coasting steamer of 500 tons, lumbering along in a lumpy sea, when attacked by a submarine, changed her course, flung herself and her cargo of coals on the enemy, saw oil slowly spreading over the spot, put in at Devonport, earned £500, a D.S.O., and a temporary commission of Lieutenant in the R.N.R. for Captain Bell, and £200 for her crew. Other examples of ready resource in the face of similar danger could be cited in addition to this classic instance.

Both Britain and Germany have gathered a rich harvest of experience during the submarine war. This has led to a highly concentrated game of skill and wit. In the early stages probably neither side had sufficient imagination to foresee the great developments that would take place in submarine and anti-submarine devices. The immediate results of what may be called the first phase of the blockade of the United Kingdom were small when compared with subsequent efforts. The number of ships sunk from the 18th February,

Daring Deeds

1915, to the 24th of the following month totalled only twenty-two, while the arrivals and sailings were probably in the neighbourhood of 7500. Few people outside the Central Empires took the threat seriously, though it offended our sense of the fitness of things to think that it was possible for a single ship to be lost by enemy action. For a time the new form of warfare was kept in check. It was certainly not regarded by the nation as a serious menace until the beginning of the intensive form of siege.

With the introduction of improvements and a large increase of output, the likelihood of attack naturally multiplied. Fortunately the means of dealing with the growing danger also increased. The efficacy of the methods adopted was duly acknowledged by the German Minister of Marine. In May, 1917, he informed the servile Reichstag that, owing to improved methods employed by the Allies, Germany had lost more submarines recently than usual.

An armada of British ships of various shapes, sizes, and speed are hunting for German *Unter-*

The Art of Submarine-chasing

seebooten in fair weather and foul. British ships, mind you, not vessels of the Allied navies. The arming of merchantmen, though for defensive purposes only, has also to be taken into account. On a certain occasion, for instance, a doughty little collier was confronted by a big U-boat, whose commander disdained the use of a torpedo on so insignificant a vessel, and began firing with a heavy gun. The collier also happened to be armed, though with a gun of much smaller calibre. For nearly fifteen minutes not a single shell of either opponent scored a mark. The zig-zagging of the collier made it difficult for her own gunner and also for the submarine. Yet the aim of the Briton was better than that of the German. His shells fell within a reasonable distance of the underwater boat, while those of the enemy went wide of the mark. For a time the fight waxed fast and furious, with nothing to show for the exertion beyond the expenditure of ammunition. The submarine sought to approach closer, and succeeded, to her eternal undoing. At a range of 400 yards or thereabouts the collier scored a bull's-eye.

Daring Deeds

It struck the submarine near the bows, causing an explosion, and a submersion entirely unconnected with the filling of the ballast tanks. She failed to reappear. What came to the surface was a nasty, oily mess and a multitude of bubbles.

From the 4th August, 1914, to the end of October, 1917, the total net reduction in British tonnage of ocean-going vessels of 1600 tons and over was two and a half million tons, or 14 per cent. of the craft on the register in that class. Taking all things into consideration—the absolute ruthlessness of the enemy, their acknowledged genius for organization, the skill with which they handle their craft, and the fact that they have put the utmost reliance on submarine warfare, which is regarded by them as their trump card—the result must be out of all proportion to their hopes, and a glowing testimonial to the wide-awakeness of the Navy and of the Mercantile Marine.

Those who are despondent should take heart of grace and remember what such a stalwart as Sir Walter Scott wrote when

The Art of Submarine-chasing

things looked black and ugly during the Napoleonic campaign. "Alas," he notes, "we want everything but courage and virtue in this desperate contest. Skill, knowledge of mankind, ineffable, unhesitating villainy, combination of movements and combination of means are with the adversary. We can only fight like mastiffs, boldly, blindly, and faithfully." Yet we won, though Allies came and Allies went. Two years after the victory of Trafalgar had shattered Napoleon's bid for sea-power, 559 ships of the British Mercantile Marine were made prizes, while only thirty-three of the raiders were captured or sunk.

There is good reason to believe that just previous to the outbreak of hostilities Germany had no settled convictions as to the practical efficiency of underwater craft. Certainly she had considerably fewer of these vessels than the British Navy possessed.¹ Several were on the stocks, but twenty-five represented the number actually commissioned. Only

¹ The first British submarine was launched at Barrow on the 2nd November, 1901.

Daring Deeds

three years before the war Grand Admiral von Tirpitz, now universally recognized as the arch-apostle of maritime frightfulness, declared that "He considered submarines to be in an experimental stage, of doubtful utility, and that the German Government was not at all convinced that they would form an essential or conspicuous part of their future naval programmes. This opinion," according to the American to whom the statement was made, "which undoubtedly incorporated the opinion of his principal subordinates, was not expressed with any purpose of misleading, for it was a well-known fact at the time to every one in the profession that Germany's position in the matter of submarines was that of a third-class Power."¹ On the other hand, Lord Fisher was an earnest believer in the possibilities of the submersible.

The simplest way of dealing with a U-boat is by ramming. The only suitable craft

¹ Marley F. Hay, in a paper read before the Society of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers, New York, 16th November, 1917.

The Art of Submarine-chasing

immediately available for the purpose was the torpedo-boat destroyer, which had the immensely desirable qualification of speed. It had also one very undesirable feature. The nose of many torpedo-boat destroyers built before 1914 was a particularly sensitive organ, and not intended for poking into other people's business in this particular manner. It was therefore found necessary to fit rams on them. As Julius Cæsar tells us of the battle against the Veneti, the first recorded naval battle in which men of Britain took part, "damage could not be done by their beaks." In the more recent classes the destroyer has grown out of all knowledge, and seems on the verge of becoming a serious rival to the light cruiser, whose dignity and position are likely to be seriously perturbed thereby. The bows of these new ships are sufficiently strong to grapple with the toughest submarine afloat. Knowing this to their cost, the Germans have protected the latest *Tauchkreuzer*, or diving cruiser, by an armour belt of steel plate. This does not necessarily indemnify the type from loss or serious injury. In

Daring Deeds

August, 1917, a large enemy submarine was towed into Zeebrugge after having been severely damaged as the result of ramming. The 'accident' cost her the loss of three men, and must have put her out of action for a considerable period. British T.B.D.s are held in awe and respect by German commanders. Count Reventlow, the prolific naval writer, has frankly admitted that they are the undersea boat's most dangerous foe.

The U 12, believed to have a displacement of about 450 tons, and therefore a comparatively small affair, was sunk by the T.B.D. *Ariel*, which saved ten of the enemy's crew, while eighteen were drowned. The *Badger* destroyed another by similar means off the Dutch coast, and had her bows "somewhat damaged." The U 29, a larger vessel than the U 12, whose commander became the man of the moment in Germany when he sank the *Cressy* and her consorts while in charge of another boat, was also rammed.

Another British destroyer charged U 18, broke off her periscope, and damaged the propeller so seriously that it would not work.

The Art of Submarine-chasing

The submarine then came to the surface, and her crew appeared on deck. As the destroyer approached, the boat went under, leaving the men struggling in the water. This, if we may believe the evidence of those who were rescued, was a planned affair. Lots had been drawn as to who should remain behind to open the valves and prevent the craft from being captured. The lot fell to a mechanic, who perished. No fewer than a dozen destroyers took part in the rounding-up of U 8 off Dover, and the boat was finally destroyed by the *Gurkha* and the *Maori*.

The razor blade of the T.B.D. is therefore a sure and certain weapon. The murderous mine is sometimes circumvented by the wire guy ropes which run the length of the vessel and beyond the bows and stern. This protection, however, is countered to some extent by laying the canisters at varying depths.

Doubtless some of the enemy submarines have met with an accident similar to that which befel our own E 6. She fouled a mine in the Heligoland Bight. The beastly thing got securely fixed between one of the hydroplanes

Daring Deeds

and its guard. Everything possible was tried below the surface to remove it, to no effect. The mine refused to budge. There was no alternative but to come to the top and see what a little gentle persuasion would do. This was triumphantly accomplished about half an hour later by a lieutenant and an A.B., though the attempt was made at imminent risk to both boat and crew.

Perhaps the most useful weapon of the mine variety is a depth charge. This is used when the approximate position of the submerged submarine is known. Particulars may have been sent by wireless, or the tell-tale wave created by its movements when the periscope is invisible, but the boat not too deeply immersed, may have given the show away. The fuse of the charge is set to detonate at a certain depth, and as the explosive used is of terrific force, it is by no means necessary to hit the object aimed at. If the U-boat is anywhere near, she is bound to feel the effects. Even if the 'blow' causes no more injury than 'springing a leak,' that is a much more serious affair than in a surface ship.

The Art of Submarine-chasing

Once let sea-water mix with acid from the accumulators, and chlorine gas is generated. The youngest dabbler in 'stinks' knows this to be fatal in a confined space.

A look-out on a patrol vessel, plying her accustomed beat, noticed the wake of an underwater craft no great distance away. Immediately the course of the auxiliary was altered so as to cross the tell-tale foam. Overboard went a surprise packet for Fritz, followed within a few seconds by another. It is false economy to be frugal in such matters. There were three explosions; a third depth-charge brought further violent disturbances, followed by others as two more patrols came up helter-skelter to take part in the chase. For twelve hours oil continued to rise from the spot. Some submarines die slowly.

Then there is the submarine sweep, also of the mine persuasion, and every bit as powerful in the largest types. This charge, instead of being dropped, is towed behind a destroyer at an equable depth. Woe betide anything that it strikes. A further method is for T.B.D.s to dredge after the manner

Daring Deeds

of mine-sweepers, but using a chain with explosives attached instead of a wire hawser and sinkers. This has been found particularly useful when a submarine was believed to be 'lying low,' like Brer Rabbit.

The bombs used with so much effect at the Front have their counterpart at sea, though they are not handled in the same fashion. The lance-bomb of the Navy and its auxiliaries is a 14 lb. affair attached to a shaft, and is hurled at a submarine when she is so ill-advised or misinformed as to come up at close range. The French Navy has special vessels of light draught and high speed to chase the pests.

Below the surface the submerged boat is usually able to detect the presence of other ships by an ingenious instrument called the microphone. This, like so many other implements of warfare, has an antidote in the hydrophone, which does for the surface vessel what the other achieves for the submarine. Although many of the German craft now have one or more telescopic periscopes to enable the commander to see what is going on at a much greater depth than was formerly the case, it must

The Art of Submarine-chasing

be remembered that this apparatus is likely to get broken or damaged. Then the only resort is to emerge from the ditch at some time or other to execute repairs. When blind the gyro compass gives the course, and the distance travelled is indicated by the revolutions of the electric motors, but it is impossible to navigate a ship which is a long way from its base entirely by dead reckoning. As the U-boats are usually cruising for about three weeks at a time, it will be readily understood that an accident of this kind, happening at perhaps several hundreds of miles from the base, is not at all a pleasant episode from the point of view of the commander and his men.

While many of the German submarines range from 800 tons to 1000 tons, there are some of approximately 1500 tons, others of between 2400 tons and 2800 tons, and a few of 5000 tons. The radius of action of the last-mentioned is roughly 8000 miles, with an alleged surface speed of twenty-six knots. In addition to a supply of torpedoes, the armament includes 5.9-in. guns firing a 90 lb. shell. Some of the U-boats now have double

Daring Deeds

hulls, the outer skin being utilized as water-ballast tanks, and affording a certain measure of protection against injury. Others appear to be used solely for laying mines. These weapons are placed in a chamber, the airtight door shut, and another opened giving exit to the sea. To expel the water for further operations merely affords useful work for a pump. A word as to a very artful dodge sometimes resorted to by an enemy which openly defies articles of the Hague Convention and sets at nought every instinct of humanity. Torpedoes have an immersion apparatus which renders them harmless if they miss their mark and therefore fail to explode. Before firing, the Germans have been known to jam this appliance. It therefore becomes to all intents and purposes a floating mine, in direct contravention to International Law. But then, as Bernhardt maintains, "the brutal incidents inseparable from every war vanish before the idealism of the main result."

The modern U-boat is a mighty step in advance of its predecessor of 1914, when a German paper announced with great

The Art of Submarine-chasing

gusto that the "newest 800-ton submarines" mounted 14-pdr. quick-firing guns on disappearing mountings, one before and one abaft the conning-tower. The horse-power was given as 1800, the submerged speed twelve knots, the surface speed seventeen knots. The crews of these boats undoubtedly lived "a dog's life in a tin can."

Nets several hundreds of feet in length, with meshes about ten feet square, buoyed at one edge and weighted at the opposite edge, have proved their value. They are dropped in the track of a submarine, and if the boat happens to get her nose into one of the snares the all-important fact is disclosed by the movement of the buoys. Larger nets are used for protecting harbours, and to some of them contact mines are attached. Recent U-boats are fitted with a saw in the bows to cut the nets, and a cable running their whole length to lift them.

All manner of peculiar accidents have happened to underwater craft. One German submarine torpedoed another by mistake off the coast of Norway. The U 16 had a narrow

Daring Deeds

escape from being interned by the Danish Government. She was compelled to enter Esbjerg harbour owing to engine troubles, and only completed the necessary repairs four hours under the time-limit. Peculiarly enough, the next submarine in order of succession also developed similar disabilities. Her commander endeavoured to take her to Bergen, Norway's chief western port, and was promptly informed that if he did anything of the kind he and his ship would not be allowed to leave. To make quite certain, the submarine was escorted outside territorial waters by torpedo boats.

According to details furnished by the skipper and crew of the North Shields steam trawler *Alexander Hastie*, a German submarine became entangled in her fishing gear. The enemy attempted to dive beneath the vessel, but apparently struck the warps which connect the gear with the ship. In due course the submarine emerged on the opposite side, and from all appearance had either turned turtle or was lying broadside on the water. She remained like this for about twenty minutes, and then sank.

The Art of Submarine-chasing

One representative of Germany's guerilla warfare at sea met a Tartar when least expected. A steamer which has been torpedoed in the engine-room is not usually in the best of conditions for retaliation. Several compartments were already flooded, when the British auxiliary showed in no uncertain way that there was a considerable amount of life and 'kick' still left in her. The first shot fired from her gun made an ugly wound in the conning-tower, and cut the two periscopes clean away. Before there was time for the submarine commander to repent of his audacity in coming up to gloat over his victim, several more shells were plugged into his ship. This amazing *contretemps* had the effect of bringing the crew on deck, which already showed distinct signs of assuming anything but a level position. They held up their hands in token of surrender ; the British gunners were ordered to cease fire, and preparations made to take the men off. Germans will do any dirty trick to gain their end. The display of hands proved to be nothing but a low-down subterfuge. The U-boat suddenly picked up speed, and might

Daring Deeds

have escaped in the mist had the British commander been less wide-awake. He ordered firing to be resumed. It was quickly followed by an explosion and the disappearance of the boat. All but two of the crew were drowned. Having turned the tables on her adversary, the auxiliary returned to port for repairs.

It is not always easy to prove a 'kill,' especially when the grave is many fathoms deep. In such cases decease has to be presumed. When a submarine has been tackled in comparatively shallow water there is no difficulty in signing a death certificate, because a coroner in the elaborate rig-out of a diver is sent down to investigate. The skipper of the patrol boat most concerned just drops a buoy in the vicinity, reports his hopes, and others do the rest. The spot is dragged with wire ropes for all the world as though the police were searching for a corpse in the Serpentine. Many a diver has seen things calculated to give him perpetual nightmare. These horrors brave men keep to themselves. Perhaps it is just as well.

A submarine, stated to be the U 30, struck



Proving a U-Boat's End
Chas. Pears

238

Should a trawler presume a 'kill,' the spot is buoyed, a report is made, and the place dragged. Should the wire come into contact with an obstruction a diver is sent down. If the submarine is located the reward is paid.

The Art of Submarine-chasing

a mine, presumably of German manufacture and sowing, off the mouth of the Ems, and sank in about twenty fathoms of water. It is said that divers ascertained that some of the crew were still alive, but as nothing could be done to rescue them, twenty-eight perished by suffocation.

Although the successors of Fulton's *Nautilus* have submersible depots from which to draw supplies, it is extremely unlikely that they have repair ships. Like some of their secret bases on land, the maritime sources from which they draw their stores are the object of constant search on the part of the Patrol. Floating buoys containing petrol have been dropped by obliging 'neutrals' or taken out to sea by German agents, while others have been opened and found to contain letters. Spies, on whom the Central Powers depend for much useful information, have been conveyed from one country to another by submarines.

The officers of the R.N.A.S. have a fine bag of U-boats to their credit. At a height it is usually possible to see the pests when travelling

Daring Deeds

under water. Well-placed bombs have done the rest. To destroy the submarines in their homes is, of course, the best of all possible remedies. In this the R.N.A.S. has played a prominent part. Tons of bombs have been showered on Zeebrugge and Ostend, where the water-rats most do congregate.

All these antidotes partake of the offensive. Under the designation of defensive methods we must place the convoy and the armed merchantman—as distinct from the armed auxiliary—the tightening of the belt on the part of the civilian, the herculean labours of those who toil long hours by day and by night in shipyards and engineering shops, and the men at the plough. It is the greatest naval war in history.

As Germany cannot rule the waves she is trying to rule beneath them, not altogether without success. Yet the wear and tear on the nerves of submarine crews, subject to the devices mentioned and others to which no reference can be made, must be very marked.

This doubtless accounts for the experiments

The Art of Submarine-chasing

made by the enemy in the matter of electrically-controlled motor-boats driven by petrol engines and capable of travelling at high speed. So far the trips of these vessels have not been particularly successful. The British Admiralty regards them as freaks; the term seems injudicious. Both the submarine and the aeroplane were subjected to ridicule by wise-acres, who held that it was as impossible to travel under water, excepting in a downward direction, as it was to attempt to invade the realm of the feathered world. The Great Upheaval is sustained by these two weapons.

These new vessels, several of which have been scotched by the Navy, "carry a drum with between thirty and fifty miles of insulated single-core cable, through which the boat is controlled electrically," says an Admiralty *communiqué*. "The fore part carries a considerable charge of high explosive, probably from 300-500 lb. in weight. After the engine has been started the crew leave the boat. A seaplane, protected by a strong fighting patrol, then accompanies the vessel at a distance of

Daring Deeds

three to five miles, and signals to the shore operator the helm to give the vessel. These signals need only be starboard, port, or steady. The boat is zigzagged while running; this may be intentional or unintentional. On being steered into a ship the charge is exploded automatically. The device is a very old one. A boat similarly controlled was used in H.M.S. *Vernon* (the torpedo experimental ship) as far back as 1885. The only new features in the German boats are petrol engines and W.T. signals, neither of which existed then."

Possibly the crewless ship is nothing more than an ingenious device of no practical value. On the other hand, it may have potentialities that we wot not of. It is a British failing to jeer and then cheer; to dismiss contemptuously and then imitate. None recognizes this better than the genial 'man in the street,' the typical representative of the nation. Optimism cannot win the war, though the quality is a desirable asset. Some of our most prominent statesman have been misled by regarding hopes as certainties. In 1915 Lord Selborne

The Art of Submarine-chasing

said that the submarine menace was "well in hand"; at the end of 1916 the Minister of Agriculture characterized the British Isles as "a beleaguered city"; when 1917 was nearing its close General Smuts remarked that: "Whatever the dangers of the submarine, it has ceased to be a decisive factor. The submarine has been beaten by the silent heroism of our Navy and our Mercantile Marine." The weekly returns issued by the Admiralty scarcely corroborate the General's preliminary statement. It is prophetic rather than actual, and we believe the second phrase will be justified. With the conclusion arrived at by the distinguished South African, all are agreed: "Deeds have been done on the sea so astounding that details cannot be published until the end of the war. In the general critical temper of our times less than justice has been done to this aspect of our naval effort, but I feel sure that the future will appraise it at its true value."

CHAPTER XV

The Crowning Infamy

"God has called us to civilize the world; we are the missionaries of human progress."—WILHELM II.

THE late Field-Marshal Von der Goltz, admired by Germans for the stiffening he gave to their Turkish allies, and cursed by every Belgian worth his salt as an inhuman oppressor, was perfectly candid in his pre-war book¹ as to the modern Prussian idea of the nature of war: "The simple conception of military operations which obtains to-day, namely, that war, where necessary, revokes all rights incidental to a state of peace, did not obtain in former generations."

This statement admirably expresses both the ethics of war as waged by Germany and the truth as to the 'progress' which Kultur has achieved in the domain of warfare. It is a fitting corollary to Bernhardi's often-quoted dictum that might is "the supreme right,"

¹ *The Nation in War*. An English translation is published.

The Crowning Infamy

which is simply another way of saying that the end justifies the means. The two words "where necessary" are the very warp and woof of Prussian policy, whether social or political, military or naval. "Necessity," insists the Hun, "knows no law."

"Where necessary" has been the excuse for sinking hundreds of neutral vessels, for torpedoing hospital ships, for using civilians as a living shield to cover the advance of soldiers, for bombing hospitals and cathedrals, for any and every abominable act committed by the enemy during their mad orgy of blood and iron. Had no international code of honour been formulated at successive Hague Conferences the war might have ended sooner. Nations which abide by agreed rules are seriously handicapped when confronted by unbridled barbarism. For instance, if one side uses poisonous gas and liquid fire, it is fairly obvious that the other side must follow suit or suffer annihilation. Frightfulness, therefore, becomes a highly dangerous game to play. Your opponent may go one better, or, rather, one worse.

Daring Deeds

When a man has 'done his bit' and been rendered *hors de combat* in the doing of it, civilization rightly holds that he is entitled to the respect and attention of friend and foe alike. By all the rules of the game, as played decently, he automatically becomes neutral. Germany has a reservation: "where necessary." Her attitude at sea is that the stricken, however helpless, is still a combatant. Not once, but several times she has committed the unforgivable sin against the supreme law of humanity. To excuse oneself for a crime is to plead guilty, and this is what the German Government has done. It is scarcely credible, but nevertheless true, that the Prussians ordered hospital ships to be attacked "without further consideration" on reports furnished to Berlin that the vessels in question were more heavily laden on the outward journey than when making the return passage with wounded soldiers.

Now it must have occurred to the authorities who support the Kaiser's belief that "Germany's future lies on the water," that steamships require coal. They also knew

The Crowning Infamy

perfectly well that, as the mining districts of France were in their own hands, thanks largely to their treachery against the neutral State of Belgium, England could not obtain coal in France. It therefore followed that hospital ships *were* more heavily laden on the outward journey. They filled their bunkers for both trips. This is the simple explanation of the matter; common sense would have revealed it—if necessary.

The allegation was that munitions were taken over to France by these vessels. There was not a particle of truth in the accusation, nor in the statement made by an Austrian officer that he saw the *Mauretania* and other hospital ships sail from Naples for Salonika with troops and munitions, and return with sick and wounded. The date given was in March, 1916. The Cunarder did not so much as call at that port during the whole month, and in the previous November had been inspected by Swiss, American, and Danish Consuls, who certified that the rules laid down for hospital ships were being observed in every particular. A German officer, Lieutenant

Daring Deeds

Von Spiegel, stated in a book written by him that he had seen guns and troops on a British hospital ship. After being taken prisoner he admitted that he had no foundation for his charge.

Let us look at the other side of the question. The Germans also have hospital ships. The *Ophelia* was alleged to be one of them. She sailed from the Thames as a merchantman on the 4th August, 1914, having on board nearly 350 passengers. The German Government had "seen a red light," and ordered her back to Hamburg. As we had not then declared hostilities, she proceeded on her way without opposition. Subsequently, when war had broken out, she received her war-paint and certificate as a hospital ship, though the British authorities were not notified, as they ought to have been. After calling at various naval ports the *Ophelia* began to wander up and down the German and Dutch coasts. Her comings and goings were so suspicious that she attracted the attention of the British Patrol. When occasion arose for her use owing to the German torpedo-boat

The Crowning Infamy

S 116 having been roughly handled by some of Jellicoe's men, she was two days late in beginning a search for possible survivors, and altered course and increased her speed on sighting a British submarine.

The *Ophelia* showed no national flag, and her general behaviour seemed so strange that H.M.S. *Meteor* searched her, as she had a perfect right to do. The result was amazing. No fewer than 1220 coloured lights were found on board. That was quite sufficient evidence to justify the British commander in dismantling her wireless apparatus and escorting her to a port on the opposite side of the North Sea. In the Prize Court it was held that the *Ophelia* had been fitted for a signalling vessel, and it was proved that she had never been used for the purpose of receiving sick or wounded. She was therefore deemed a lawful prize.

In the same early days of the war, when it suited Germany's purpose to keep on friendly terms with the United States, a dastardly attempt was made to wreck the Hamburg-Amerika liner *Hamburg*. This ship had been chartered by the United States Red Cross

Daring Deeds

Society, and renamed the *Red Cross*. In due course she sailed from New York for England, flying the Stars and Stripes, and having as passengers forty doctors and 120 nurses. When they were at sea the engineers found that the bilges had been stuffed up with all manner of strange articles, from blankets to brushes, and the pumps rendered entirely useless. In addition, the suction-pump from the provision room had been blocked, and the pumps available for fire-extinguishing purposes made unserviceable by the removal of essential parts. Valves connected with the boilers had also been taken away. The liner was saved by the almost incredible exertions of the engine-room staff, who worked day and night to overcome defects that would have wrecked her.

The status of vessels flying the Red Cross intimately concerns the Merchant Service, because they are almost entirely manned by its members. Within two days of the declaration of war, a number of large steamers had been fitted up as hospital ships, including the Union-Castle liners *Carisbrooke Castle* and

The Crowning Infamy

Dunvegan Castle. The first hospital ship arrived from France on the 28th August, 1914, with 189 wounded men. Many private yachts were also converted for the purpose, such as Lord Tredegar's *Liberty*, the Duke of Sutherland's *Catania*, Admiral Sir David Beatty's *Sheelah*, and Lord Iveagh's *Celo*. All these vessels were magnificently equipped. The *Liberty* was commanded by her owner, who bore the entire cost of equipment and maintenance, and was granted a commission as lieutenant in the R.N.R. In addition to fifty cots there were operating and Röntgen ray rooms, attended by five surgeons and orderlies. The Royal yachts and the Admiralty yacht *Enchantress* were kept available as hospitals for wounded officers in case of need.

Every hospital ship in the service of the British Government was distinguished in the manner agreed upon by the Tenth Convention signed at The Hague on the 18th October, 1907, to which Germany was party. They were painted white, with a green horizontal band five feet in width running round the

Daring Deeds

vessel, and flew the national and Red Cross flags. They had also large red crosses conspicuously painted fore and aft and on the funnels, which were brilliantly illuminated at night. The Hague regulations were never departed from by the Allies in any respect ; how Germany observed them will now be told.

The *Asturias*, a superb vessel of over 12,000 tons, owned by the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, was the first Atlantic liner to be employed as a hospital ship in the Great War. Her new status had been duly notified to the belligerents by the War Office. On the 1st February, 1915, when about fifteen miles from Havre, a deliberate attempt was made by a submarine to sink her. Mr Fletcher, a cadet, reported to Captain Law that a torpedo just fired at the *Asturias* was passing astern. On reaching the bridge the latter distinctly saw the wash of the submersible which had fired the weapon, and at once altered course. He also telegraphed " Full speed ahead " to the engine-room, and zigzagged until the Havre lightship had been passed. Several other people, in addition to the officers, also

The Crowning Infamy

observed the torpedo and the enemy. "It was a very light and fair evening," runs the master's report, "and at 5.15, broad daylight, and under no possibility could the character of the ship be mistaken."

As was only to be expected, the German Government tried to whitewash the crime. The 'explanation' was issued by their Embassy at Washington, and is as follows: "The Government is sorry to admit that the *Asturias* was attacked on Feb. 1 at five p.m. Looming up in the twilight, carrying the lights prescribed by ordinary steamers, the *Asturias* was taken for a transport carrying troops. The distinctive marks showing the character of the ship not being illuminated, they were only recognized after a shot had been fired. Fortunately the torpedo failed to explode, and the moment the ship was recognized as a hospital ship any attempt at further attack was immediately given up."

This interesting information, which was not vouchsafed until the following month, had been better withheld. It was a tissue of lies. The attempt was made less than a quarter of an

Daring Deeds

hour after sunset, in "broad daylight," as Captain Law avowed. The distinguishing marks of the ship were illuminated. Why the firing of a torpedo should have aided identification passes the comprehension of an ordinary human being who has not had the advantages of a Göttingen education. Subsequent events proved that the real regret of the German Government was the failure to sink the *Asturias*. Previous to 1914 she had been the envy of Hamburg shipping magnates interested in the development of trade with South America—and this is largely a commercial war, out of which Germany hopes to reap handsome profits.

The *Asturias* was marked for destruction. On the night of March 20-21, 1917, while steaming with all navigating lights and Red Cross signs showing, she was torpedoed without warning. This crowning infamy followed a further announcement that the German Government had "positive proof that, in several instances, enemy hospital ships have often been misused for the transport of munitions and troops," and henceforth

The Crowning Infamy

traffic by certain routes would "no longer be tolerated." These proofs were alleged to have been placed before the British and French authorities through diplomatic channels. Somehow or other they failed to come to hand. A similar impudent falsehood was flashed by wireless after the sinking of the *Asturias*, where reference was made to the "customary procedure" on the part of the British of abusing the privileges of the Red Cross.

Of those on board the liner, numbering between 300 and 400 persons, thirty-one were returned as dead, and twelve missing. As many of her company were asleep, it borders on the miraculous that so few were lost. Happily, there were no invalids on board, about 900 sick cases having been landed a short time before. Members of the Royal Army Medical Corps, a number of sisters, and the crew found accommodation in the ship's boats, though not without difficulty owing to the darkness. Some of the craft were met by a patrol vessel and given a welcome tow.

According to the available evidence the

Daring Deeds

torpedo wrought fearful havoc. It seems to have snapped off the starboard propeller, wrecked the rudder, cut its way through to the engine-room, and put the dynamos out of commission. As in the case of the P. and O. *Maloja*, the rapid intake of water prevented the engines from being stopped. The ship therefore continued to go ahead. Of those injured by the explosion, three died after landing. An officer and twenty-four R.A.M.C. men were drowned or died of exposure.

The German Government was threatened with reprisals by the British authorities. Freiburg was bombed from the air in retaliation. Neither promise nor performance made the slightest impression on the set purpose of the enemy. Less than a fortnight later the crime was repeated, followed by others. The *Gloucester Castle*, a twin-screw steamer of 7999 tons gross, owned by the Union-Castle line, was torpedoed without warning in mid-Channel during the night of March 30-31. The victory was duly recorded to the credit of a U-boat by Berlin official wireless. Although about 400 wounded were on board, all were

The Crowning Infamy

eventually transferred to vessels which raced to the assistance of the hospital ship. The casualties were confined to the engine-room staff. Those below decks have not fared well during the war.

A woman who left in a boat with a number of patients, and spent a highly uncomfortable hour in reaching a cargo steamer on account of the big sea that was running, could not resist paying a delicate compliment to all concerned. "Everyone in the hospital ship," she writes, "was splendid, and everything went off all right. But the men on that old horse-boat were magnificent—they are at this sort of job eternally, and they helped us in every conceivable way. They were," she adds, "absolutely ripping to us, and gave us coffee before we were a second inside the saloon."

The loss of his vessel was a bitter grief to Captain J. W. Watson Black, particularly as when in command of a transport in the Dardanelles he had skilfully thwarted an attack by submarine, on which occasion he was presented with a jewelled sword as a

Daring Deeds

memento by the Ghurka officers on board. This gallant seaman died in hospital at Southampton in the first month of 1918.

A few weeks after the wreck of the *Gloucester Castle*, the *Dover Castle*, a larger ship belonging to the same line, met with a similar disaster when flying the Red Cross in the Mediterranean. Patients and staff were safely taken off, but six of the crew were killed.

The Gallipoli campaign is one of the tragedies of our naval and military history. It accomplished nothing beyond adding a wonderful page to the age-long record of British heroism, in which hospital ships figure conspicuously and worthily. A vessel which rendered yeoman service was the *Rewa*, a turbine steamer of 7308 tons gross, belonging to the British India Steam Navigation Company's fleet. In three months she carried some 7000 wounded and sick Tommies.

The *Rewa* was on her way home from Malta on the night of the 4th January, 1918, when she was torpedoed and sunk in the Bristol Channel. Almost twelve months before,¹ when

¹ The 29th January, 1917.

The Crowning Infamy

the Germans declared that hospital ships would not be allowed "on the military routes for the forces fighting in France and Belgium, within a line drawn between Flamborough Head and Terschelling,¹ on the one hand, and from Ushant to Land's End on the other," they pointed out that they "believed themselves justified in adopting these measures as the route from Western and Southern France to the West of England still remains open for enemy hospital ships, and the transport of English wounded to their homes can consequently be effected now as heretofore without hindrance." The *Rewa* had neither been nor was in the so-called barred zone. No nation, with the exception of Germany and her satraps, has ever proclaimed open and closed routes for hospital ships. The malignancy of the attack, therefore, becomes the more marked. The *Rewa* was displaying all the lights and other requirements of The Hague Convention, including three big Red Crosses on each side. The crime was deliberate and carried out with malice aforethought.

¹ One of the Friesian Islands, off Holland.

Daring Deeds

The captain was on the bridge with the third officer. All was going well, when two small white lights were observed on the port bow, about a mile ahead. Concluding that they belonged to a sailing vessel, the captain ported his helm. The lights maintained approximately the same position. A few minutes afterward, the *Rewa* was torpedoed amidships on the port side. That is tantamount to saying that the submarine used the Red Cross in the centre as a target.

The *personnel* of the ship numbered over 550, including 279 invalids. The problem of removing from a sinking vessel men unable to do a single thing for themselves teems with difficulties. There is no working timetable on such occasions. Be the period of grace long or short, everyone has to act on the assumption that the liner may go down at any moment. The cot cases had to be carried up and placed in boats. The night was bitterly cold, the clothes of the poor fellows scanty, even of those able to fend for themselves. Practically all on board, excepting those on watch, had gone

The Crowning Infamy

to bed. The able-bodied were up and doing in a trice.

In the scurry there was no confusion. A nurse shared all the warm clothing she possessed with men who were very ill, and found an overcoat placed round her shoulders by an officer, who thus proved himself also a gentleman. Those who could walk ambled up the stairs to their allotted boat stations. The medical staff and such of the crew who could be spared carried the invalids up from the bottom ward, which was below the water line, and rapidly flooding. Each was wrapped in a blanket. Very deliberately, very orderly, and very carefully they were placed in the boats. Almost as soon as the last patient had been rescued the sea claimed the ward. The captain and staff surgeon went below to make quite sure that nobody was left. They found all clear, and returned to the deck.

A silent band of heroes was grouped where their boats should have been. They made no protest, no murmuring. Their craft had been scattered to the winds by the explosion. It was the fortune of war. They stood thus

Daring Deeds

for ten, twenty, thirty minutes, listening to the surge of the sea that must soon claim them if assistance did not come. The wireless had been in action. There might be a response. The product of Marconi's genius had performed miracles before. As yet there was no sign of anything moving on the face of the waters other than the boats leaving the ship.

The first officer knew the carrying capacity of each individual craft. Where there was room for more passengers he filled the vacant places with the heroes. Nearly 150 found accommodation by reason of his care. Of the ship's company, numbering well over 500, three perished. They were victims of the torpedo.

The *Rewa* was struck at 11.15 p.m. Within ten minutes the first boat had left the ship. Fourteen were filled and launched. Those in the life-boat had a terrible experience. This craft, containing a number of patients and the Lascar crew, had been lowered half-way when the after-fall jammed. Simultaneously the forward-fall was released, leaving the boat dangling upright, with her fore-part

The Crowning Infamy

under water. The petty officer in charge, who was on the sick list, immediately clambered on board the ship, evidently with the intention of seeing what could be done to free the ropes. Before the P.O. could effect his purpose, a stoker secured a chopper and hacked them asunder. The boat fell, and although it was almost water-logged, three patients set to work to bail it out, while four men applied themselves to the oars.

Shortly after midnight the *Rewa*, which had kept almost an even keel, thereby greatly facilitating the transfer of the passengers, plunged bows foremost and disappeared. Anticipating the dispatch of patrol vessels to the rescue in answer to the wireless messages, the captain gave instructions that the boats were to keep together as much as possible, and coloured flares shown at intervals to attract attention. A small oiler and two trawlers arrived at about 3 a.m. Port was reached seven hours later.

A semi-official statement on the wreck of the *Rewa* was made in the German Press. In competent quarters it was "regarded as

Daring Deeds

impossible that the vessel could have been torpedoed by a submarine. There can accordingly be only one possibility, namely, that she was sunk by a mine." As there were no British mines in the vicinity, the suggestion was not particularly felicitous.

A fiction sedulously spread by the Hun news agencies seriously libelled certain Spanish officers. Their presence on board would have guaranteed the *bona fides* of the vessel by a recent arrangement made at the suggestion of King Alfonso.¹ They were absent because they had found that soldiers alleged to be suffering from fever were in reality perfectly fit! The lie was nailed by an official denial on the part of the Spanish Government, while the Ministry of Marine announced that in accordance with the existing agreement Spanish representatives accompanied hospital ships only in the Mediterranean. When homeward bound they landed at Gibraltar. This statement was corroborated by Dr Macnamara, Parliamentary and Financial Secretary to the Admiralty.

¹ From the 10th September, 1917, onward.

The Crowning Infamy

Many of us are apt to forget that the ordinary perils of the sea are vastly augmented by reason of the war. The old familiar light-houses and shore lights are no longer available at night, the position of buoys, once as well-known to captains as are signal posts to an engine-driver, have been altered, and risks by mine, submarine, raider and enemy men-of-war added. The wreck of the hospital ship *Rohilla* in October 1914 was a tragedy brought about by a combination of several of these undesirable circumstances, plus a furious sea, blinding rain, and a thick mist.

The *Rohilla*, a twin-screw steamer of 7400 gross tons, with 229 persons on board, was bound for Belgium to receive the maimed, the halt, and the blind from the stricken fields of Flanders. She had made her way from the Firth of Forth in normal weather for the time of year, but off St Abb's Head the conditions changed considerably for the worse. Altering his helm to avoid the mine-fields, and making allowances for wind and tide, Captain Neilson believed the course he had set would bring him seven miles off

Daring Deeds

Whitby, and four miles off Flamborough Head. At 4 o'clock on the following morning the lead showed that the *Rohilla* was closer shore than was expected. A little later a sudden shock flung Captain Neilson against the telegraph on the bridge, knocked the chief officer against the bulkhead, and lifted others off their feet. Almost everybody at once realized that the ship had struck a mine.

Proceeding at full speed, the captain attempted to beach the *Rohilla*, but she crashed on the rocks, which are so undesirable a feature of the Yorkshire coast from the mariner's point of view. Had he headed her to sea the ship would probably have gone down with all hands.

Heavy waves swept the liner both fore and aft, and it soon became evident that the vessel might break up at any moment. Knowing that there was comparative safety amidships, Captain Neilson ordered those who were aft to change their quarters. Some did so, but others, probably prevented by reason of the seas, remained where they were.

A wonderful feat was performed by Second Officer Colin C. Gwynn and five volunteers.

The Crowning Infamy

With infinite difficulty they launched the ship's life-boat, pulled through the boiling surf, and almost got ashore with a line. When within an ace of triumph, the rope fouled the rocks, and Gwynn was compelled to cut it to prevent disaster to his boat. Meanwhile the Rocket Brigade had got to work, and was endeavouring to throw lines to the *Rohilla*. Several of them reached the wreck, but could not be secured. At last one was made fast, only to snap under the strain like a piece of rotten elastic.

After being dragged along the Scar to Saltwick Nab, the Whitby life-boat was launched, and succeeded in rescuing two parties, including four nurses, the stewardess, and a number of doctors and sick-berth stewards. She could not return a third time owing to the damage that had been sustained. The Upgang life-boat, after getting within about twenty yards of the wreck, was swirled away by giant eddies. It made repeated attempts to reach the vessel, but was driven back. Father Neptune was not on the side of humanity that day.

Eventually the Scarborough life-boat arrived in tow of the steam trawler *Morning Star*.

Daring Deeds

Both stood by throughout the long hours of darkness, although the skipper and crew of the trawler had battled with the rough sea all the previous night. Skipper Smalley refused to leave the wheelhouse for a moment. Before dawn broke the after-part of the hospital ship had broken away. Those on it were swept off and perished.

All the *Rohilla's* boats had either been washed overboard or smashed. At the master's suggestion some of those who could swim made a brave attempt at low water to reach the beach, although the gale had not appreciably moderated. Chief Officer Bond floated ashore on a box. When the fact was signalled to those on board they raised three hearty cheers. Those who landed, badly buffeted and half dead, owed not a little to the gallant captain, who watched the current and directed them.

There was no gear for the purpose of making rafts, only cabin doors and shutters. Some of the survivors saved themselves with their aid. Of fresh water there was so little that there was scarcely a thimbleful each. Yet

The Crowning Infamy

there were no complaints, and none had more than his share. There was nothing to eat.

Fifty remained on the wreck. They huddled together in the chart-room and the cabins, almost perished with the cold, and soaked to the skin. The midship portion of the vessel alone remained.

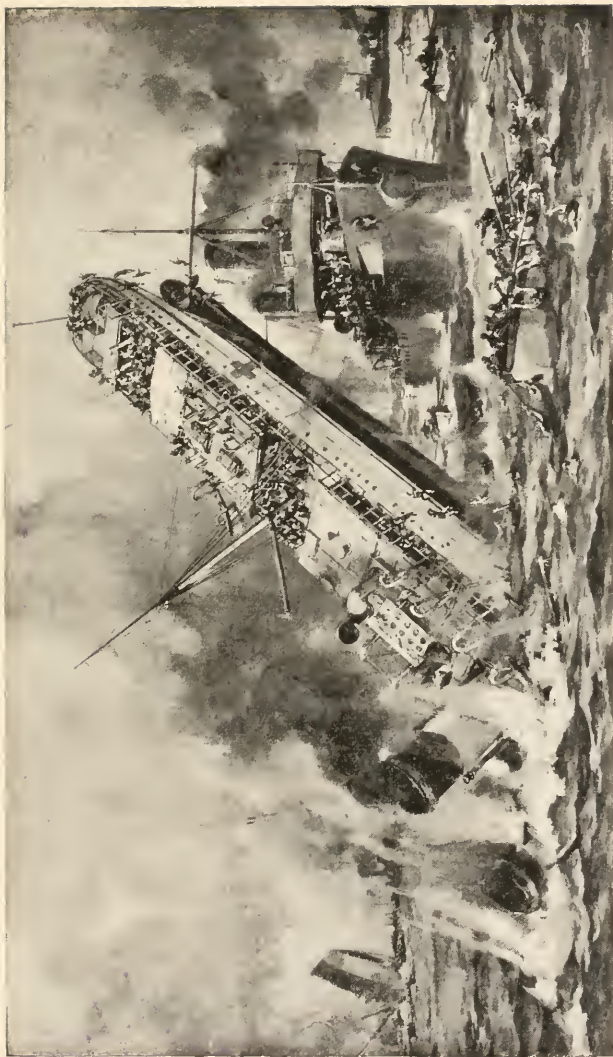
Another night of agony followed. On the following morning the Tynemouth motor-life-boat, *Henry Vernon*, after breasting her way forty-five miles, came upon the scene, and, despite the submerged rocks in the immediate vicinity, succeeded in taking the survivors on board. After leaving the ship Captain Neilson returned to the bridge and rescued a little black kitten. Those who stood by the *Rohilla* to the last had spent fifty hours on the wreck.

Another hospital ship which struck a mine and foundered was the *Anglia*. Only a short time before she had conveyed the King across the Channel after his accident at the Western Front. The disaster occurred in the afternoon of the 17th November, 1915, when the white cliffs of Dover were three miles distant. If one *has* to be mined it is just as well to be

Daring Deeds

as close to shore as possible. On this particular occasion both time and position favoured the stricken giant. Although the wireless was blown to pieces, there was no lack of assistance. All the war vessels in the neighbourhood left their regular 'beats' and raced to rescue the *Anglia's* passengers, many of whom were quite helpless. Over 160 cot cases were being conveyed to 'Blighty.' So great was the shock that the bridge was blown to smithereens, and Captain Lionel J. Manning thrown on to the lower deck.

The *Lusitania*, a London collier on her way to Portugal, also encountered a mine as she was standing by to help the sinking vessel. While some of her crew were busy picking up survivors from the Red Cross ship, they heard a muffled noise similar to that which had brought them on their errand of mercy. There was scarcely need to look in the direction whence the crack of doom had proceeded. Their own steamer had been holed and was now settling down. It would have been a particularly drab ending to a tragic story had those on board the collier been deprived



The Sinking of the Hospital Ship "Anglia"

W. H. Koek-koeck

The Crowning Infamy

of assistance. They were rescued by their own boats shortly before she turned turtle. A boat from the *Anglia*, full of wounded, reached the *Lusitania* just previous to the explosion. Two soldiers had actually got on deck. They escaped for a second time that day, though it was a narrow squeak.

As the *Anglia* was struck forward she began to sink by the head. Her stern gradually lifted completely out of the water, eventually assuming so steep an angle that a patrol vessel was enabled to pass beneath. This prompt measure on the part of the captain of the patrol saved many lives, for it afforded an opportunity for some of the poor fellows who still remained on board to drop on to her deck. If they did not land on what one might liken to a feather bed, they were at least thankful to be afforded a chance of life. About forty men risked it, and the majority of them came off with nothing worse than a severe shaking, but two, unfortunately, were badly hurt, and died before reaching Dover. How some of them escaped being cut to pieces by the racing propellers of the *Anglia* is a mystery.

Daring Deeds

The death-roll numbered eighty-five. In all probability it would have been less but for the fore-part of the ship becoming submerged very rapidly and engulfing the wards situated in that portion of the ship. Some 300 souls were saved.

Everybody had a good word to say for the wonderful work of the nurses. They helped to carry their patients from below, buckled life-belts on, and then assisted them to reach the rails. "They stood by the ship to the end," said a wounded Tommy; "then they jumped into the water, taking their chance with the rest of us."

German caricaturists are fond of depicting John Bull as a very uninteresting-looking individual, dressed in tweeds, and holding a big briar pipe between teeth resembling miniature grave-stones. He is supposed to be devoid of humour. Perhaps it is better to lack wit than humanity, though most of our sailors have a plentiful supply of both. One of them, after having a leg amputated, asked a nurse for the missing member. "It's got all my money in the stocking," he whispered.

CHAPTER XVI

Wizards of the Wireless

"It seems to us who are filled with the spirit of militarism that war is a holy thing, the holiest thing on earth."—WERNER SOMBART.

THREE modern wonders of the world have played exceedingly important parts in the Great War. Submarines, aeroplanes, and radio-telegraphy have each made appreciable contributions to the sum total of the all-but-universal conflict. Probably the last-mentioned has been the most ceaseless in its activity. Ever since wireless telegraphy recalled the First Fleet to Portland, five days before Britain entered the arena, it has directly influenced the march of events and been the means of accomplishing mighty deeds for the Empire. It has often proved mightier than the sword.

Men of the Mercantile Marine would apotheosize Marconi had they the opportunity. He is their guardian angel. Thousands of them

Daring Deeds

owe their lives to his wonderful discovery, and many a ship has been saved by its benevolent operations.¹

Here is a typical case of how wireless 'shepherds' vessels from port to port and across thousands of miles of sea in times of stress. A certain neutral liner was about to leave New York for Rotterdam. Before starting, news came that the British mine-fields in the North Sea were being extended. The information was not particularly welcome to the captain. He was far more anxious to see the Boompipes than to stare at the Statue of Liberty. Being a man of quick decision, he decided to rely on his wireless for particulars necessary to safe navigation. That he would fail to pick them up was unthinkable. True enough, when about 450 miles out the wireless Station at Bergen, Norway's most important western port, sent the necessary information, together with details as to the new positions of certain lightships. A few hours later everything was confirmed from Scheveningen, in

¹ I have to thank Mr H. J. B. Ward, editor of *The Wireless World*, for much valuable information.

Wizards of the Wireless

Holland, and subsequently the captain was told that a tug would be waiting for the steamer off the North Dogger Bank. Then he got into conversation with the tug and the lightships. When ploughing the North Sea the liner struck a mine. In response to wireless messages torpedo boats hurried to the scene. The owners were kept informed of the vessel's condition until her arrival off the Hook of Holland, where she was anchored in safety. This is not the unique but the usual.

The admiration of the Service for the operators is unbounded. They are known as red-blooded men. Not one of them has failed at the critical moment, a point borne out by officers of the ships chiefly concerned. Their personal messages to headquarters are usually couched in terms such as these: "Ship torpedoed, all effects lost ; awaiting instructions." One operator sent a message of this kind three times in as many months, each occasion marking the torpedoing of the vessel he was on. He never flinched ; no word came from him suggesting a transfer to a station on shore. His assistant had been wrecked twice.

Daring Deeds

A very determined effort to send the s.s. *Tredegar Hall* to the bottom was made by a submarine, whose lair was about 100 miles south-west of the Scilly Isles. The pirates have done a lot of damage thereabouts ; it is one of their favourite haunts. The enemy came across the steamer shortly after four o'clock in the morning, noted there was no gun, and anticipated easy prey. Somehow things went agley. The crew missed their early cup of cocoa, and wasted nearly three hours and a half of precious time before the German commander broke off the action. Then it was a case of necessity and not of inclination.

Two torpedoes were discharged in rapid succession ; one missed its mark, the other passed under the ship's stern. Without a moment's delay the wireless operator got in touch with Land's End and Ushant. There was a pause in the enemy's activity, for what reason is unknown. For a time it appeared almost as though the underwater craft had no desire further to molest the *Tredegar Hall*. Perhaps the crew got their cocoa, but more

Wizards of the Wireless

likely extra work on account of a temporary break-down. However that may be, there was an interval of about forty minutes. It was the lull before the storm, for the enemy suddenly brought his guns into action.

This unpleasant news was radiated again and again by Operator Stanley Smith, until the aerials and spreader poles were completely shot away, thereby rendering the apparatus valueless. Smith had remained in his cabin all the while, quite undisturbed by the shells that were falling and bursting around, and taking no more notice of the fragments that pierced the roof than if they had been rain-drops.

At this point the captain called him out, but Smith was not the type of man who is glad to be relieved of a dangerous duty. With a supreme scorn of the enemy, he set about rigging up new aerials and make-shift spreader poles. He must have had a charmed life. For two hours he was under fire in an exposed position, yet remained unwounded. Smith had almost completed his self-allotted task when a patrol boat made its appearance on the horizon,

Daring Deeds

to the consternation of the submarine. It beat a hasty retreat, without so much as sending a farewell shot.

The captain of the *Tredegar Hall*, who was awarded the D.S.O., in reporting this fine incident says: "I give the wireless the highest praise, as no doubt it was the means of bringing the patrol boat on the scene." He characterized the conduct of the operator as "deserving of the greatest appreciation."

A wholesome fear of the wireless is a marked characteristic of the latter-day pirates. On occasion the mere sending of the S.O.S. signal and the receipt of a reply has been sufficient to scare them, even after the opening round has been fired and the destruction of the ship attacked reasonably assured. The Germans have picked up both call and answer, and decided that discretion is the better part of valour.

The commander of the notorious *Möwe* was wont to warn his captives against using their apparatus.¹ The master of the s.s. *Flamenco* disregarded these instructions, and on being taken to the raider was questioned as to his wilful

¹ See *ante*, p. 129.

Wizards of the Wireless

disobedience. "It was my duty to do so," answered the officer. "It was my duty to destroy you as you were placing my ship in danger," the Count retorted. With ready wit his prisoner politely informed him that he expected to be killed by the way they were going about it, but the thought did not stop him. "You did right," said the commander, "and I would have done the same."

Before Captain Fryatt's capture he was told by the Germans that if he attempted to employ his wireless, ship and passengers would be sent to the bottom. The operator inquired whether he should summon assistance. "No," answered Fryatt, "I don't care what they do with me, but I must think of the lives of the women I carry."

On some occasions the enemy has been able to 'jam' the British wireless. This seems to have been the case when the *Alcantara* fought the *Greif*,¹ at any rate until the latter's wireless apparatus had been rendered useless by a well-placed shell. Then, and not till then,

¹ See *ante*, p. 174.

Daring Deeds

the operator was able to get into touch with other ships of the Patrol.

In the difficult task of abandoning a vessel after she has been torpedoed, wizards of the wireless have played noble parts. The two operators of the *Laconia* were so intent on sending intelligence of the number of boats that had left, and the direction they were taking, that when they came out of their cabin they found themselves the sole occupants of the rapidly-sinking liner. She was so low in the water that the gun platform was already awash. They jumped into the sea and swam in the direction of the captain's collapsible boat, whose occupants gave them a right royal welcome, and in which several anxious hours were spent by all, alternately rowing and bailing, until picked up.

Many members of the extensive Marconi clan have willingly sacrificed themselves for others. One who "gave his life for the great cause," in what the captain of the ship characterized as "such a noble manner," was Mr Arthur Henry Dews, of the s.s. *Marquette*. After the liner had been abandoned, Dews was found

Wizards of the Wireless

seated with several others on a small craft, to which a number of men were clinging. Some of the latter showed such evident signs of approaching collapse that they were lifted on to it. Dews, recognizing that their need was greater than his, and that it was only with difficulty that the raft, being overloaded, could be kept from overturning, jumped off and swam to a piece of wreckage. On this frail support the brave fellow drifted away from the party and was seen no more. Exposure has killed many brave men, and Arthur Dews is not the least of these.

The *Zent*, a steamer of 2485 tons register, "tight, staunch and strong, well manned, victualled and found," was sailing from Liverpool to Santa Marta, Columbia. She was proceeding at a fair speed one night, and was about twenty-eight miles south-west of the Fastnet light, when a torpedo practically blew out her starboard side. Another explosion occurred almost immediately, completing the work of destruction. The whole tragedy was begun and finished in two minutes—say in the time it takes an average reader to peruse

Daring Deeds

this page. The first torpedo destroyed the dynamo of the wireless, but Operator Proughten brought the emergency set of instruments into service, sent out the distress signal, and gave the position of the vessel. That was mighty quick work. Three boats were launched. Not one remained the right way up. Some of their former occupants managed to grab the overturned craft, others clutched at flotsam. Of a crew of sixty, eleven were saved. They owed their lives to Proughten's nobility. He went to eternity at his post, and that is the best way a man can go. In a protest made to a Notary Public at Queenstown, Captain G. E. Martin, the third mate, the *chef*, and a fireman stated that "the brave gentleman's life was sacrificed to his duty, and by his self-sacrificing devotion to duty he was the means of calling the assistance by which the survivors were saved."

How radio-telegraphy helped to defeat a particularly determined attack on the s.s. *Duendes*, a steel screw steamer of 4602 gross tons, owned by the Pacific Steam Navigation Company, is told in Captain Alban Chittenden's

Wizards of the Wireless

report. The affray took place late in the afternoon of the 25th March, 1916, when "we observed a Scandinavian barque lying hove to, distant about five miles, under two lower topsails with the main topsail to the mast. In consultation with the chief officer, John Blacklock, we thought it very strange, and fearing that a submarine might be lying on the other side of her, we kept a good look-out, keeping away two points from the barque. Our course was North 83, East true, speed 10.5 knots.

"At 5.40 p.m. we heard a shot which dropped about four ship's lengths astern of us. We then sighted a submarine, which opened fire on the starboard quarter at a distance of about three miles. We immediately altered the helm so as to bring the submarine right aft, and sent to the engine-room to put all hands on to the fires and open the ship out to the utmost. At the same time I instructed the Marconi operator to send out the S.O.S. signal, giving the position of the ship, etc., which he did; the same was immediately picked up by a shore station, after

Daring Deeds

which the Marconi operator sent out all positions as the course of the ship was changed.

“ The submarine continued firing from the port and starboard quarters until 6.30 p.m., working us round to the north-east and north in order to keep us in the remaining light in the sky. As the firing in the stokehole became greater and the speed of the ship increased, flames came out of the funnel, which made a valuable target for the submarine, consequently we were forced to put the dampers on.

“ The firing ceased from 6.30 to 6.45 p.m., when he commenced again, the shots falling ahead of the ship on both sides. He continued firing until 7.25 p.m., then ceased for ten minutes, owing to the weather becoming squally. At 7.35 p.m., the squall clearing, he opened fire on us with shrapnel, working us right round as before to the remaining light in the sky. We kept altering the course to keep the ship out of the light and to bring the sea abeam, which made it very difficult for him to aim accurately. One of the shrapnel shells put the wireless apparatus out of order for a time, some of the shots entering the

Wizards of the Wireless

Marconi cabin and bridge deck house. The firing ceased at 8 p.m.

“ The deck was strewn with shrapnel, and the ship was hit in several places with small pieces, but as far as we are at present aware no serious damage has been done, with the exception that two of the plates on the star-board side have been knocked in rather badly with some of the first shots.

“ The behaviour of all on board was admirable.”

Marconi men have done all kinds of useful jobs in addition to their ordinary routine. Nothing seems to come amiss to them. Mr W. G. Williams, the junior operator on the s.s. *Anglo-Californian*, worked with feverish energy in the stokehold while his senior, Mr J. F. Rea, continued on duty in his cabin throughout the memorable bombardment.¹ In response to Rea's messages, an unseen warship sent instructions to hold on as long as possible, and indicated the course the steamer was to take. Eventually another wireless was received which bade the crew be of good cheer. “ Can

¹ See *ante*, p. 113.

Daring Deeds

see your smoke," it ran. "Hold on. Funnel red and blue bands with yellow star." For four hours the operator on the man-of-war and his unknown collaborator on the sorely-tried merchant steamer exchanged confidences. Part of the time Rea was lying on the floor surrounded by broken glass and breathing the fumes of spent gunpowder. "For God's sake hurry up," he urged. "Firing like blazes," he tapped out. There is never need to tell the British Navy to make haste. It is a silent Service, but not a slow one. Space and time are not to be annihilated, but they are to be bridged, and we may be sure that the nerves of all on board the warship were on edge for fear of coming up too late. They worked for dear life and at last had the satisfaction of freeing the *Anglo-Californian* from the hornet. Of course immediately the warship came near down went the U-boat.

When considering such fiendish cruelty as that practised on the crew of the s.s. *Belgian Prince*, the average Briton is apt to realize that his language excels as a medium to disguise thought rather than as a means to express deep feeling.

Wizards of the Wireless

The tragedy took place about 200 miles from the Irish coast. The torpedo, fired without warning, did such extensive damage, and the vessel listed so badly that the captain ordered the crew to take to the boats. All hope of getting early assistance was abandoned when the wireless was destroyed by shell fire.

The two operators, Messrs J. F. Evans and A. E. Elliott, found accommodation in the boats, which were signalled to come alongside the submarine. While the men were being lined up on the upper deck, the master was taken below. The German commander, a cool and calculating murderer, next told his accomplices to smash the boats of the *Belgian Prince*, a task speedily performed with the aid of axes. Having stripped the prisoners of their warm clothing and deprived them of their life-belts, the Germans disappeared through the hatchway and made ready to start. Without the slightest warning, the submarine went ahead, leaving its unwilling passengers of the outer world to debate as to the meaning of the manœuvre.

They had not long to wait before they

Daring Deeds

realized what was in store for them. The submarine had travelled about two miles when Mr Thomas Bowman, the chief engineer of the *Belgian Prince*, who had already nine experiences of being nearly drowned, detected the ominous sound of water being taken into the tanks. "Look out, she's sinking!" he shouted, and jumped into the sea. His first thought was to render assistance to an apprentice. He did what he could by holding him up until the poor lad died of exposure. When daylight came the officer was not a little astonished to see his old ship still afloat. He fully expected that she had gone down hours before. Striking out with all the strength he could muster, he attempted to reach her. Success did not attend his efforts. Before he had got very far she blew up.

George Seleski, a Russian A.B., saw the *Belgian Prince* a little earlier, and clambered on board. Shortly afterward the submarine appeared, and a number of Germans followed him, taking every article they deemed of value or likely to be of service. When they walked in the direction of his hiding-place Seleski

Wizards of the Wireless

thought it was time to make himself scarce. He had no wish to renew their acquaintance. Jumping over the stern, he clung to the rudder for half an hour, but was again compelled to shift his quarters owing to the approach of the enemy. He eluded detection for a time by swimming about. Then some of the Germans caught sight of him. To his astonishment and relief they took no further notice beyond pointing and grinning at him. Another diversion was caused by the ship's cat floating by on a piece of timber. Securing the frightened little animal, he placed it in an empty dinghy that came drifting along with a mass of wreckage. In it Seleski made himself as comfortable as possible, and awaited events. To his great delight a patrol boat hove in sight about half an hour later. It had already rescued the first engineer and the second cook. They and the A.B. were the only survivors of the *Belgian Prince*.

Operators have died in their little cabins. Ernest Corothie, of the s.s. *Ohio*, stopped behind to send out distress signals while the others left the ship. C. L. Edwards, of the

Daring Deeds

s.s. *Saxon Monarch*, warned by the captain that he had better not go to the wireless room, cheerfully returned to radiate the position of the ship, thereby enabling his colleagues to be rescued. One young fellow, after having his vessel torpedoed, was picked up by a passing steamer, which was subjected to the same treatment. He was killed by the explosion. Another operator, after the enemy had done his worst and succeeded, reported to the bridge for orders. Having received them, he proceeded with his work, and went down with the ship.

These and many more have fostered what is known as 'the Marconi tradition.' It is treasured in the wireless service with the reverence of the 'Nelson touch' in the Navy.

CHAPTER XVII

Drifters in Action

"Cities, empires, republics rest on sacrifice."

ANATOLE FRANCE

A LANDSMAN can never understand why shipping folk give their vessels such peculiar designations. Just glance at this list of drifters: *Quarry Knowe, Selby, Young Linnet, Tait's, Girl Gracie, Coral Haven, Girl Rose, Serene, Helen Norah, Admirable, Avondale, Craignoon, Felicitas, Transit*. Acting on the assumption that "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet," it must be inferred that a drifter by any name than that painted on her bows would do her work equally well. The *Victory* and the *Dreadnought* are excellent names for fighting ships, but what can one make of the *Tait's*? Just nothing. Yet she and her consorts enumerated above are associated with one of the most gallant exploits of the war. Not one of them remains afloat to-day. They are

Daring Deeds

buried many fathoms deep in the Straits of Otranto.

The Davids of the Patrol, together with some thirty consorts, had the temerity to fight three Austrian light cruisers and their attendant destroyers. Each was armed with a single gun of small calibre, and carried a crew of ten. The men must have had extraordinary faith in their weapon. It was about as useful for the purpose as a pea-shooter would be for dispatching elephants. Do not infer from this that it was a case of misplaced confidence. Faith has been known to achieve miracles. These selfsame weapons had settled submarines. Why not larger game ?

The Three-Power standard that you have heard so much about is excellent when you are fighting with the sum total of the Fleet—which you never do. God may be on the side of the heaviest battalions, as the Corsican Emperor cynically asserted, but Great Britain has often had to fight actions at sea with men and material alarmingly disproportionate to the enemy's strength. Perhaps the crews of the drifters argued after this manner, though there is

Drifters in Action

nothing to lead one to suppose that the men of the R.N.R. are painstaking students of history. In peace and war life is a little too strenuous for them to take up so serious a hobby. Philosophical reflections on the past for use in the present is scarcely their *métier*. Their dominating idea at the moment was to do as much damage as possible to the enemy with the means at their disposal, and hang the consequences.

Considered mathematically the idea of engaging the Austrians was ludicrous. The total complement of the little fleet was probably less than the number of men carried on any one of the opposing cruisers; the total weight of broadside was a few pounds hurled from the aforementioned one gun per ship. England would have remained England and nothing more had her builders thought too much of consequences. These men of the drifters did not dismiss from their minds the thought of the all-but-certain disaster that awaited them. They never entertained it. They just went for the enemy, and the fight they put up enabled reinforcements to provide

Daring Deeds

a sequel to the story of the fourteen drifters that never returned to port.

The drifters, disposed in eight divisions of about half a dozen boats each, were watching anti-submarine nets in the Straits of Otranto, the neck of sea which separates Italy from Albania and links up the Adriatic and the Mediterranean. How the Austrian warships managed to leave their base at Pola without being noticed is a matter of conjecture. They crept out from their fastness under cover of night; they emerged at dawn bearing down on the sentinels. On approaching the line the cruisers separated, one attacking the centre, the remaining two the divisions of each wing.

There is this much to be said for the enemy. One of the captains gave the men of the drifters an opportunity to take to the boats before he opened fire. He adopted no cold-blooded submarine tactics. First of all he signalled by flag and syren that the crews were to abandon their vessels. As there were no signs that his order was being carried out, he approached to within 100 yards of the *Gowan*

Drifters in Action

Lea and repeated his instructions by megaphone. Skipper Joseph Watt neither intended to stop nor clear out, though he must have appreciated the sportsmanlike behaviour of his enemy.

Watt addressed his reply to his own crew. Surrender? He would burst first! His words make one surmise that he was an ardent admirer of that grim old sea-dog, Lord Fisher, who used the phrase in a message to the Royal Naval Division. He bade his men 'fight to a finish,' slipped his nets, rang down to the engine-room for full speed ahead, and called for three cheers.

The crew shouted as though the reputation of the British Navy depended on their response, manned their solitary gun, and opened fire. These were supremely brave things to do. Nothing makes the opposing side more rattled than a shout of defiance and the contempt for superior force shown by opposing it with inferior weapons. The phrase 'against desperate odds' was never more correctly used or more amply illustrated. The crew of the *Gowan Lea* shot with excellent precision too,

Daring Deeds

keeping hard at it until a shell from the enemy put their puny weapon out of action. The blowing-up of a box of ammunition did not tend to ease matters. The explosion badly wounded Deckhand F. H. Lamb, but failed seriously to impair his usefulness. Though still subjected to a heavy fire, he went on helping to repair the damage to the gun. Lamb's pluck and coolness earned for him the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal. Before he and his mates finished the job the cruiser had passed out of range.

In the encounter one of the drifter's consorts, the *Floandi*, had sustained heavy damages and a serious casualty list. The *Gowan Lea* now went to her assistance. Seven of the *Floandi's* men were either killed or wounded ; three alone remained to work the ship, and do what they could for the injured. Skipper Dennis John Nichols, though wounded in three places, remained steering his vessel in the wheel-house, and when Lieutenant G. R. Barling was killed, took command of the late officer's division. Despite his hurts Nichols launched a boat, from which he managed to

Drifters in Action

plug the holes made in the side of the drifter during the action. They were only rough-and-ready repairs, carried out in the minimum of time and without technical finish, but they held until the *Floandi* reached port. He had saved his ship.

The other divisions were also getting it hot and strong from the enemy. Skipper William Bruce and his men of the *Quarry Knowe* remained at their posts until the vessel blew up. Skipper Robert Stephen, of the *Taits*, stuck to her while she was sinking under him, as did the crews of the *Girl Rose* and the *Selby*. Finding that one of their number was missing, the men of the *Taits* returned through heavy fire to search for him. Skipper William Farquhar, together with his company, remained on the *Admirable* until there was precious little of her to remain on. The boiler had blown up, and the wheel-house was smashed. After they had taken to the boat, A. Gordon, the second hand, went back. It is believed that his intention was to fight the gun. Before he could reach it he was killed. Skipper Robert Cowe kept the *Coral Haven* heading

Daring Deeds

for the enemy and his gun firing until the ship was a raging furnace and beyond control. The first Victoria Cross ever awarded to the master of a drifter was bestowed on Joseph Watt; the other skippers mentioned each received the Distinguished Service Cross. Never were there more worthy recipients.

Many other daring deeds were performed in that early morning hour. Second Hand Joseph Hendry, of the *Serene*, refused to abandon his ship. The others left her and were captured. When she sank under him, he managed to keep his head above water, and was eventually rescued. To-day he wears the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal. Engineman Walter Watt was taken prisoner with the remainder of the crew of his drifter. While being conducted to one of the cruisers he jumped overboard. He was recaptured, but eluded the vigilance of the guard when alongside the man-of-war. Once again Watt plunged into the sea. This time he escaped. Result — C.G.M. Another engineman, by name Charles Mobbs, remained below until the main steam-pipe was shot away, when the

Drifters in Action

escape of scalding steam compelled him to withdraw. As soon as it was possible for him to go back he returned and drew the fires. This job satisfactorily accomplished, Mobbs rendered valuable assistance in plugging holes in the ship's sides, with the result that she duly arrived in harbour, somewhat dishevelled in appearance, but watertight. Although under heavy broadside fire, the crew of the *Christmas Daisy*, *Garrigill*, *Espoir*, and *British Crown* brought their ships safely through the action.

Reference was made in the last chapter to the enemy's anxiety to destroy wireless promptly. Throughout the fight it was evident that the Austrian gunners were resolutely determined to prevent appeals for help from being sent. Their first attentions were directed against the drifters fitted with the necessary apparatus, one in each division. Operators Wadsworth and Tarwood, of the *Capella* and *Garrigill* respectively, remained on duty throughout the action, while the Marconi man of the tough little *Floandi* unfortunately paid for his devotion with his life. His log was

Daring Deeds

afterward forwarded by the Rear-Admiral commanding the British Naval forces in the Adriatic as an exhibit for the new National War Museum. "This log," writes the officer, "was found in this condition in the wireless operating cabin of H.M. drifter *Floandi*, after an attack on the drifter line by three Austrian cruisers in the Adriatic on May 15, 1917. The wireless operator, Douglas Morris Harris, A.B., R.N.V.R., continued to send and receive messages although the drifter was being riddled by shells until he was killed by a piece of shrapnel whilst writing in the log. The piece of shell perforated the log, and the line made by his pencil when he was hit and collapsed can be seen on the page upon which he was writing. The operator was found dead in his chair lying over the log."

Without the slightest concern for the shells that were passing between the mast and the funnel, Second Hand John Turner clambered aloft to strike the topmast so that the aerials should not be destroyed. For displaying such great coolness under fire Turner was awarded the C.G.M.

Drifters in Action

Lieutenant R. H. Baunton, in charge of the patrol line, did such excellent work in rallying the drifters and reorganizing the various groups that he was given a bar to the D.S.C., which he had already won. It can scarcely be a matter of surprise that a leading Italian newspaper, commenting on the action, stated that the crews of the drifters "gave proof of marvellous physical endurance and self-abnegation."

The end of this fine story has yet to be told. In response to the wireless calls two British light cruisers, H.M.S. *Dartmouth* and H.M.S. *Bristol*, supported by French and Italian torpedo-boat destroyers, came up and gave chase to the enemy. Instead of putting up a fight, the Austrians adopted the proverbial tactics of the bully. They must have broken their own records for speed as they made off toward Cattaro. Here the cruisers were joined by battleships, which in turn were supported by powerful coast batteries and mine-fields.

The pursuing vessels, now greatly outnumbered, drew off. Yet the enemy had not

Daring Deeds

escaped lightly. Italian aviators in sea-planes confirmed that one cruiser was on fire and another badly damaged. The *Dartmouth*, though torpedoed by a German submarine, returned to port. According to a Vienna *communiqué*, seventy-two British sailors were taken prisoner. The city of the Habsburgs waxed enthusiastic over the announcement that an English cruiser with four funnels was sunk. We have no wish to deprive them of their triumph, particularly as we retain the cruiser.

One Victoria Cross, one C.M.G., two D.S.O.s, five D.S.C.s, one bar to the D.S.C., five C.G.M.s, seventeen D.S.M.s, and one bar to the D.S.M., were awarded in connexion with the Otranto action; thirty-one officers and men were mentioned in dispatches. Such recognition is not lightly won.

Another tip-and-run raid was carried out in the darkness of the early morning of the 15th February, 1918. This time the scene of the hussar stroke, so beloved of the enemy, was the Straits of Dover, where patrol boats were busy hunting a submarine known to be in the

Drifters in Action

vicinity. A lynx-eyed look-out had seen it on the surface, which is the best of all evidence of its noisome presence. A flotilla of ten or more large German torpedo-boats suddenly confronted the ships, sank a trawler and seven drifters, and decamped in such inglorious haste that it was impossible for any of the British fighting forces to get in touch with them. The rocket used by the drifters for the purpose of signalling had doubtless afforded the enemy a clue as to their position.

One can only surmise the programme of the Germans on this occasion. It would be foolish to assume that their sole object was the destruction of the converted fishing craft, whose whereabouts were probably entirely unknown to them until they were suddenly discovered. The Berlin official account had it that the destroyers "made a surprise attack on the strong forces guarding the English Channel between Calais and Dover and Cape Grisnez and Folkestone." The surprise part was perfectly true, but the ships of the Dover Patrol consist of something more substantial than trawlers and drifters, and, as the

Daring Deeds

flotilla did not come up with them, it is difficult to see how they could be attacked. Imagination is not a characteristic of the Teuton in time of peace ; it develops abnormally when there is a war on. The British losses in men were stated to exceed 300 ; actually they numbered about thirty.

For all we know to the contrary, the submarine that was occupying the attention of the drifters may have been acting as an advance guard for the destroyers, or the latter may have been supporting the former. Their real objective was probably one or more of the floating links between France and England—a transport, munition ship, or hospital ship. Neither supplies nor reinforcements were interfered with. As an attempt to interrupt the salt-water line of communications it was a lamentable failure. The pity of it was that the pirate-hunters had to face the full fury of the onslaught. That they would meet with disaster in such an encounter was a foregone conclusion. A mouse cannot fight a tiger. Nature never intended that it should do so. Likewise the Lords of

Drifters in Action

the Admiralty have taken fishing vessels into the Service for purposes other than contesting destroyers.

Again we have a motley collection of names. The trawler was the *James Pond*, the drifters were called *Jamie Murray*, *W. Elliott*, *Christina Craig*, *Cloverbank*, *Cosmos*, *Silver Queen*, and *Veracity*. The attack was made entirely by gun-fire, in this particular following the action in the Straits of Otranto. As the affray lasted about an hour, it is evident that some of the little craft took a lot of sinking, particularly as the range in most cases was only about fifty yards.

A high-explosive shell burst with such disastrous consequences to the *Violet May* that she immediately took fire, and all on board, with the exception of the mate, two enginemen, and a deckhand were killed. Of those who survived, the mate was mortally wounded and the deckhand badly hurt. Ewing and Noble alone remained capable of doing anything. Between them they launched a boat, gently lowered their ill-fated comrades, and pulled away to what they considered to

Daring Deeds

be a safe distance. Even then it was touch and go with them. They watched the fight, playing Brer Rabbit and lying low. A front seat is not desirable in a spectacle with lyddite effects. Those short, sharp flashes from out the darkness were from the muzzles of German guns. The vessels that were going up or settling down were British ships.

An enemy torpedo-boat raced past the *Cloverbank*. She was so close that it would have been possible to toss a loaf on board. Her guns towered so far above the drifter that the crews could not bring them to bear on the midget. It so happened that just at that instant she rolled, bringing the muzzles on a level with the deck of the *Cloverbank*. They barked out, and reduced men and ship to little else than blood and iron. There was a solitary survivor. Remember his name along with that of Jack Cornwall—Deck-hand F. Plane, a mere boy. But this is what a 'mere boy' can do. He made his way to the gun, and fired it. He did more, he continued firing. Then a great brute of a shell crashed amidships, and wiped another unit off the

Drifters in Action

Navy List. Plane went down standing on the grating, to come to the surface clutching it. A strong, rough hand pulled him out of the sea a little later.

The detonations which had roused the slumbering inhabitants of Dover died down. The enemy, having done his worst, was retreating rapidly to the north. Another great naval victory had been scored for the Fatherland. The honour of the Imperial German Navy had been upheld.

When the flaming sword was withdrawn, Ewing and Noble, still in their open boat, showed themselves 'a peculiar people.' Instead of pulling for the shore, they headed for the burning drifter. Their sense of decency was offended by the idea of leaving the *Violet May* to gut. It didn't seem quite 'the thing.' They got back, became officers and crew combined, tackled the flames, conquered them, placed the wounded men below and tried to make them comfortable; in a word, carried on.

The mate was in sorry case. Ewing's shirts were torn to shreds for bandages—the only dressing available. "It's nae guid," the

Daring Deeds

patient murmured, "dinna fash aboot me, lads. A'll gang nae mair on patrol."

Ewing and Noble patched up the wreck as best they could. One took the bridge and the look-out's job ; the other proved an excellent chief engineer and clinker-knocker. In due course the lame duck limped into port. She received a reception almost as warm as the fire that had sought to devour her. The two conquerors did not feel nearly so virtuous as the average citizen who gets up and makes his wife an early cup of tea. Small wonder that Lord Jellicoe has referred to the heroism of the men on the work of the Dover Patrol as "unequalled."

At 12.10 a.m. the following day an enemy submarine had three or four minutes of glorious life bombarding Dover. About thirty rounds were fired. A little child was killed, three men, a woman, and three children were injured. Slight damage was done to property, including the infirmary. Thus German *Kultur* is propagated.

CHAPTER XVIII

An Affair of Convoys

"The control of the sea, however real, does not imply that an enemy's single ships or small squadrons cannot steal out of port, cannot cross more or less frequented tracts of ocean, make harassing descents upon unprotected points of a long coastline, enter blockaded harbours."—MAHAN.

THE convoy is the antithesis of the raider. It is an old-time method of defence adapted to modern requirements. The necessity for convoying merchant ships on certain routes is forced upon us by Germany's use of the submarine. In the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars there were other reasons. The swarms of privateers which then infested the seas made it more or less incumbent that trading vessels should be gathered into fleets and defended by men-of-war.¹ This arrangement also served as a protection from assault by the enemy's navy proper, then of more frequent occurrence than

¹ Certain ships, including those of the East India and Hudson Bay Companies, were licensed to proceed without convoy. They were nearly always armed.

Daring Deeds

now. At the beginning of the World War Germany had a number of raiders specially earmarked for the purpose of playing havoc with the sea-borne commerce of the Allies. The menace was overcome, only to give place to a more formidable and insidious danger. The latest phase of the blue water conflict is the invisible war carried on by what, to all intents and purposes, is a submersible torpedo-boat and light cruiser combined.

Some folk lose heart when they read of a disaster to a convoy. To them all is lost. Their hope sinks with the ships. Up to the time of writing¹ there have been two successful raids on British convoys on the North Sea. Set against them these facts, one based on recent happenings, the other on history. In a period of a little over six months no fewer than 4500 merchantmen were chaperoned between the United Kingdom and Norway; not one was lost by the action of surface ships. Between the years 1792 and 1815 practically half our merchant fleet was captured or sunk by the enemy. Eventually, owing to inadequate naval

¹ March 1918.

An Affair of Convoys

resources, the convoy system had to be abandoned.

Much criticism has been levelled at the British Admiralty on the score of insufficient support of convoys. Apparently the self-appointed critics would use battle cruisers for the purpose, forgetting that as the strength of a chain is governed by its weakest link, so the speed of a convoy is fixed by the slowest vessel. They also overlook the fact that huge floating citadels of the *Lion* variety have themselves to be guarded by destroyers.

The following story of incidents that occurred in 1917 primarily concerns the Navy. The merchantmen involved were mostly neutrals. Perhaps the fact that the Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish ships were being convoyed by two of His Majesty's destroyers and three small armed vessels, and were carrying goods to the United Kingdom, is sufficient to justify its inclusion in a volume dealing more particularly with the British Merchant Service. It illustrates the peculiar perils of the convoy, and also serves to accentuate the bond of brotherhood which binds mariners of all nations,

Daring Deeds

excluding the Hun. He has long since severed himself from our common humanity.

The destroyers were the *Mary Rose* and the *Strongbow*. They left a certain Norwegian port in charge of twelve unarmed merchantmen during the afternoon of the 16th October, 1917, west-bound. During the night the only one of the smaller armed vessels fitted with wireless parted from the others to screen a ship which had been compelled to stop owing to that not unusual complaint at sea, a shifting cargo. With this exception all went well until daybreak on the following morning, when the convoy was about midway between the Shetland Islands and the west coast of Norway.

Suddenly flashes of gunfire were observed astern of the *Mary Rose*, followed by a low roll that even those who had not seen the blaze of cordite appreciated at its true significance. The destroyer was swung round with an alacrity that would have dodged a torpedo had one been speeding in her direction. Those below realized as clearly as the men on deck that there was 'somethin' doin'.' Her commander thought that a submarine was shelling the

An Affair of Convoys

convoy. Presumably what he saw was an attack being made by three light cruisers on the *Strongbow*, although low visibility prevented him from recognizing any of the contestants.

This is what had happened. Receiving no satisfactory reply to his challenge, Lieut.-Commander Edward Brooke, of the *Strongbow*, had at once gone into action. His opponents' first shot completely wrecked the wireless room and did other serious damage. Evidently the appearance of the enemy was so sudden that there was no time for him to radiate the intelligence to his consort. The *Strongbow* merited her name, but she was not strong enough. Her guns were fought until they were dismounted. Brooke, severely wounded, refused to surrender. Even when the once gallant destroyer was rendered almost unrecognizable he thought that possibly the Germans might make an attempt to capture her. So he ordered the engineer officers to stand by to flood the ship. In succession the light cruisers passed her and swept the upper deck with their guns, that none of her crew of heroes might escape.

Daring Deeds

Despite flame and fury, smoke and shot, the skipper of the armed trawler *Elsie* tried to bring his vessel sufficiently near to rescue those of the *Strongbow's* company who remained alive. He was driven off. Returning a little later he picked up twenty-nine survivors from the convoy. Twice again the cruisers passed and poured death and destruction into the destroyer. She was game to the last. When she went down in a halo of hissing steam she carried with her forty-seven of the toughest officers and men who ever took a T.B.D. into action.

To return to the *Mary Rose*. Gradually there emerged from the early morning mist the gaunt forms of the enemy ships, distant about four miles, and travelling rapidly. Nothing daunted, Fox challenged them, as his colleague of the *Strongbow* had done. No reply, therefore no doubt of their 'enemy origin.' Every gun that could be brought to bear breathed fire from its muzzle. Still the Germans made no answer. Funny that, and not the British way. They came on, making a bee-line for the destroyer, entirely ignoring the convoy. At three miles they tested the

An Affair of Convoys

range. Almost from that moment until the *Mary Rose* joined the *Strongbow* in the underseas they fired salvo after salvo. Not good shooting always, mind you. No ship could have lived had the gunlayers hit the target every time. First one gun, then another, was put out of action, their crews with them. The British were hopelessly outclassed in the size and equipment of their vessel.

When the cruisers were about a mile from the *Mary Rose* her commander endeavoured to manœuvre his ship so that her torpedo-tubes might play their part. They were almost his last resource. The after-gun alone remained workable. As the destroyer was turning a shell hit her fair and square, spread red ruin in the engine-room, scattered death and disaster throughout the ship, rendered her useless. The 4-in. gun had to give in. It could no longer be brought to bear on the enemy. Under the direction of Sub-Lieutenant Marsh, R.N.V.R., the crew had fed and fired, fed and fired until the position of the cruisers rendered the weapon unserviceable.

Fox left the torn and twisted bridge. A

Daring Deeds

captain has no control over a ship whose engines are cold. The heart of the *Mary Rose* had ceased to beat. The officer picked his way among the ruins of men and metal lying in hopeless confusion on the deck. He met disaster with a smiling face. The midship gun looked like a permanent invalid, but those of its crew who were not stiff and stark around its mountings were doing their best to coax it into use. "God bless my heart, lads," Fox exclaimed in his cheery voice, "get her going again! We're not done yet!" As though to give the lie direct to his genial and unquenchable enthusiasm, a shell from a broadside struck one of the boilers. It blew up, adding to the carnage.

Somehow or other two A.B.s managed to lay and fire a torpedo. They acted without orders. One of the cruisers was passing at the moment; the weapon should have struck home. It would have been a dramatic end to a dramatic episode. Fiction would have sunk the enemy; Fact failed. The torpedo missed, went astern, or did something equally useless and unsatisfactory. Able Seaman French was killed;

An Affair of Convoys

Bailey, his mate, was severely wounded in the leg by shrapnel a moment after they had done this honourable thing.

There was no fight left in the destroyer now. She lay helpless. The game was up, the incident closed. No, not quite closed, for the record of the *Mary Rose* and her brave company will be remembered by those who love ships, sailors, and the sea.

One of the cruisers had sheered round, was apparently about to ram or rake the lacerated warrior yet again, as though one can out-devastate devastation. "Sink the ship," Lieutenant Bavin told Gunner Handcock. It was useless for the captain to tell those who remained to take to the boats. Bits of the craft dangled on the davits, like skeletons on gibbets. A raft was more or less intact. He bade them launch it and get clear of the hulk.

The cruiser approached, concentrated her fire on the battered derelict that had once been a British man-of-war, and passed on. Fox, Bavin, and Handcock went down with the ship, her colours still flying. None surrendered.

Two days later the few survivors on the raft

Daring Deeds

landed on the Norwegian coast, after having fallen in with some seamen in similar straits. They were from the convoy, and had a terrible tale of cold-blooded barbarity to tell. Of the dozen ships under escort, five Norwegian, three Swedish, and one Dutch vessel had been sunk without their papers being examined or the slightest warning given. *Kultur* had again demonstrated its nature.

Four bodies, each with bullet wounds, were found in a small boat, thus proving the assertion of some of the saved that while leaving their ships shrapnel had been fired at them. The master of one of the Norwegian steamers stated that after one of the craft had reached the water a shell smashed it to atoms and killed nine men.

The incident of the Scandinavian convoy had not altogether lost its value as an interesting war topic when a similar affair happened on the 12th of the following December. On this occasion a British destroyer, four armed trawlers acting as escorts, and six merchantmen aggregating 8000 tons were lost, and a second destroyer badly damaged. The ships were on

An Affair of Convoys

their way from Scotland to Norway, thus reversing the order of things which had obtained on the first occasion. Another feature not common to both actions was that a force specially detailed for the protection of the convoy against surface ships failed to be where it was most wanted.

About a quarter of an hour before noon four German torpedo-boats¹ appeared on the rim of the sea. The merchant ships scattered, leaving the destroyers to deal with the oncoming enemy. When they were within range the *Pellew* and the *Partridge* at once closed with them. Two to one is a serious disparity in forces, particularly as we may be sure that for such raiding expeditions the latest and fleetest type would be chosen, armed with 4.1-in. guns firing a 50-lb. shell.

The fight was short, sharp, and furious, the shooting of the enemy quick and accurate. The *Partridge* was soon out of action and her commander killed. An explosion on board put the finishing touch to her career while smoke was yet

¹ Really destroyers. The Germans use the same term to denote both torpedo-boats and destroyers.

Daring Deeds

issuing from her guns. The *Pellew*, despite being holed on the water-line and her engines partly disabled, "escaped damaged," to quote an official telegram from Berlin. The men-of-war out of action, the enemy found no difficulty in disposing of the trawlers and the half-dozen merchant ships. Eighty-eight Scandinavians, including two women, were rescued by British destroyers detached from a cruiser squadron, and other survivors reached Norway in boats.

The Great War has exacted a terrible toll of our merchant seamen. They have 'played the game,' and having played it, pass on. The great churches of Peter and Paul are not for them. Their Valhalla is the Seven Seas.

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